The Cedar Star

By Mary E. Mann

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THE CEDAR STAR

He stood above her, leaning upon the hand placed on the window-frame over her head.—Page 166.

41651

THE CEDAR STAR

BY

MARY E. MANN

AUTHOR OF

"SUSANNAH," "THERE WAS ONCE A PRINCE,"
"WHEN ARNOLD COMES HOME,"
ETC., ETC.

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CONTENTS.

PART I.

PAGE

CHAPTER I.
BETTY AND HER FAMILIARS 7

CHAPTER II.
THE CURATE'S FRIEND 18

CHAPTER III.
VIOLET BELTON 27

CHAPTER IV.
BETTY MAKES A CONFESSION 36

CHAPTER V.
HARRINGAY WITHDRAWS 46

CHAPTER VI.
UNCLE EUSTACE INTERVENES 55

CHAPTER VII.
GIRLS WANT A MOTHER 64

CHAPTER VIII.
BETTY'S DARK HOUR 76

CHAPTER IX.
"MINE OWN FAMILIAR FRIEND" 83

PART II.

CHAPTER I.
AFTER TEN YEARS 95

CHAPTER II.
A HOME-COMING 112

CHAPTER III.
FRICTION 122

CHAPTER IV.
"WE FOUR", ... 128

CHAPTER V. PAGE
"WHERE ARE THE SPRINGS OF LONG AGO?" 143
CHAPTER VI.
VIOLET'S HUSBAND 156
CHAPTER VII.
THE CEDAR STAR 164
CHAPTER VIII.
HIS FORTUNE IS THE GREAT PERHAPS 170
CHAPTER IX.
A CONTRADICTION STILL 180
CHAPTFR X.
THE HARRINGAYS AT HOME 190
CHAPTER XI.
I WONDER WHY YOU CAME 199
CHAPTER XII.
THE MOONLIGHT SONATA 207
CHAPTER XIII.
"I PITY TAKE ON ALL POOR WOMEN" 218
CHAPTER XIV.
I HAD MY WAY 231

PART III.

CHAPTER I.
"INEVITABLE AS DEATH" 245
CHAPTER II.
THE WALKER CONVERSAZIONE 255
CHAPTER III.
A WOMAN'S NO 267
CHAPTER IV.
"SHE GAVE ME HERSELF, O EARTH, O SKY!" 278
CHAPTER V.
AN UNMOUNTED PHOTOGRAPH 290
CHAPTER VI.
"BILL, YOU MUST TAKE ME HOME" 303
CONCLUSION 305

PART I.

"YET this thing learn of me:
The sweet hours fair and free
That we have had of yore,
The fair things we did see,
The linkéd melody
Of waves upon the shore
That rippled in their glee,
Are not lost utterly
Though they return no more."

THE CEDAR STAR.

CHAPTER I.

BETTY AND HER FAMILIARS.

On three sides of the schoolroom table at Blow Weston Rectory the rector's three little daughters sat. On the fourth sat Miss Walker their governess.

A muddy complexion had Miss Walker, and her mud-colored hair was dressed in a hundred little curls above her little brow and arranged in sleek, moist-looking coils above her mud-colored neck. She had, besides, a remarkably short nose, and her very wide mouth was stretched to its utmost limit this afternoon in yawn upon yawn.

With one bony hand she clung to the edge of the table to preserve her equilibrium in the chair she had tilted upon its hind legs, in the other she held a long pencil with which she tenderly stirred the multitudinous curls.

Presently her mouth shut with an audible snap, her chair came down on all fours, she held up the pencil to command attention.

"Silence, if you please?" she said, "I think it is your papa's voice I can hear in the hall."

Three pairs of eyes looked up at Miss Walker and fixed themselves with three different expressions on

her face. The lady gave an eager glance out of the window and sprang to her feet.

"A cloud is coming up over the blue. I trust your papa is not going to venture out without his umbrella," she said, and disappeared through the door.

Returning, after the lapse of a few minutes, she found the heads of her three pupils bent conscientiously above their books.

"Your papa does not think it will rain," she volunteered. "He will not be prevailed on to take his umbrella."

She resumed her place again, and her occupation of yawning, and of tilting her chair, and of touching up the curls of her head, while her eyes were fixed on the April sky as seen through the schoolroom window.

Suddenly the titter, which Ian, the youngest of the Reverend Eustace Jervois's motherless little daughters, had endeavored to repress by means of a chubby hand tightly prisoning a rosebud mouth, burst forth. The gooseberry eyes of Miss Walker relinquished the celestial contemplation for that of the frightened fat face and followed the direction involuntarily taken by the sweet, traitorous eyes. They fell upon a small oblong of drawing-paper laid before her on the table. The mud complexion assumed a dull red hue, waters of anger suffused the gooseberry eyes:

"Who has dared to do this?" she demanded in shrill tones of wrath.

The two elder children, bent above their books, muttered the words of their task with renewed energy.

"I know very well who has done it," Miss Walker cried. "But I choose to be told. If confession is not at once made, you will be punished severely, and you will all be punished together."

The threat proved too much for the weak heart of fat Ian: "It wasn't me; nor yet it wasn't Emily," she ventured. She had no desire to betray Betty, but no notion of suffering for Betty's sins. She quailed before the flaming contempt of the elder sister's eyes and at once put herself on the defensive, appealing to Miss Walker in tearful tones. "I haven't told any tales, have I? I didn't say Betty made the picture, did I, Miss Walker?"

Miss Walker, terrible in hysteric wrath, had risen from her chair.

"I will not stay here to be insulted," she cried, "I never met with insult till I came to this house. I will not be insulted. I have always had little ladies to deal with before. You are not little ladies. You are three little vulgar-minded wretches. You ought to have improved under my example. You haven't improved. I wash my hands of you. I leave you to your papa to punish. The instant that he enters the house I go to him and demand that you shall be punished."

As she bounced from the room, carrying the offending sheet of paper, Ian burst into bitter weeping, and a look of alarm crept into Emily's blue eyes. Betty shut the book before her and sprang from her place.

"Come on," she said. "Let's go before she catches father, or before she repents. Come on, Emily. Ian, you are a sneak. We won't have you go and cry to Miss Walker, and ask to be forgiven."

But in spite of the prohibition, when, two minutes later, the elder children ran through the rectory garden little Ian was not far behind. She understood that having come under the shadow of Betty's wrath she might not presume to walk at either sister's side,

or to address her, but Ian never knew resentment or how to take punishment with dignity. She kept up a conversation with the black kitten she had brought in her arms and bided her time.

The three little scarlet-robed figures—for the children had not waited to pull off their schoolroom pinafores, but had picked up their garden hats, called to their dog, caught the kitten and bolted—ran across the lawn, through shrubbery and kitchen garden, to that part of the globe which was called the church meadow. They passed the church and the churchyard, whose most noticeable monument was the recently erected tall marble cross, bearing their own mother's name, and made their way to a small house placed in the corner of the same meadow. It was a quite modern house of a very ornate architecture. Its chimneys and frequent gables were almost painfully picturesque, its windows showed the maximum of mullion and the minimum of glass, their balconies of ponderous masonry scarcely affording standing room for a man and a flower-pot at one and the same time, the heavy roofed porch appeared much larger than the hall it opened into, the residence of the Reverend William Carlyon, curate of Blow Weston.

"It is Friday afternoon, his sermon time," Betty remembered.

"Perhaps he won't see us," Emily feared.

"When did he ever not see us if we wanted him to?" demanded the eldest child with scorn. She climbed the small iron gate that led between heavy stone pillars to the curate's tiny garden—the little Jervoises held it a shame to open a gate that could be climbed. Emily fell as she followed suit, but picked herself up and tried to look as if she hadn't.

"Emily's knees are bleeding," Ian, having safely landed her own fat person, remarked cheerfully to the long haired terrier waddling at her side. "Chip, Emily's knees are bleeding."

"Chip is not to have the disgrace of being talked to by a sneak," said Betty with scorn, and called the dog to her in sharp tones of command, of which Chip took not the slightest notice.

"Hi, Chip! Mr. Chipley!" Betty called with quite unnecessary loudness, and with her eyes on the window before which they stood, while Ian, putting the black kitten she carried upon its hind legs, compelled the reluctant animal to jig to a tune of her own invention, accompanied by loud mews of dissatisfaction, and while her kitten went through its unwilling performance, Ian also kept watch upon the window, whose tiny balcony was approached by three squat stone steps from the gravel path on which the children stood. Emily, with the futile boldness that now and again emphasized the extreme timidity of her nature, flung a feeble stone in the same direction.

The florid-faced young curate, sitting with his back to the window, biting at the tail of his quill pen with a frown of anxious concentration upon his brow, threw up his head with a sigh as much of relief as of impatience. He was not so very reluctant to relinquish the work in hand. He got up and opened the window and appeared upon the few feet of balcony, looking down upon the little girls in their scarlet pinafores, their battered black hats. He put his hands in his trousers pockets and stood there, saying nothing, shaking his head at his visitors with a broad smile upon his youthful, pleasant face.

"We've got something to tell you, something

glorious!" Betty cried, her feet planted apart, her hands behind her back, an eager face set in roughened ruddy clouds of hair, lifted to his.

"Don't you see darling Paulie? He wants to come in," said Ian, dancing the black kitten with vigorous steps in the young man's direction.

"I thought I said I would not be bothered with you on Fridays?" the curate reminded them.

"Yet do be bothered with us!" implored Betty, while Emily gave a gurgling laugh, and Ian, with "darling Paulie" still dangling from its forepaws to the ground, having mounted the steps, now slipped into the open window beneath young Carlyon's arm.

She was quickly followed by the other children and Chip the long haired terrier.

The curate sat down on the edge of the table where the sermon-paper lay, swinging one long loose leg. He felt in his coat pocket for his pipe, eyeing the little intruders as he filled it. Ian, who had squeezed close to his side, held up the black kitten to his face.

"Kiss darling Paulie," she entreated.

"Paul be hanged!' said the curate; but when he had lit his pipe he took the child, kitten and all upon his knee. At this mark of favor Betty grew crimson with jealous disapproval.

"A sneak isn't the kind of a person to sit on people's knees. Ian's been sneaking: she sneaked to Miss Walker. I thought you hated a sneak, Billy."

"And who's sneaking now, pray?" demanded the unmoved curate, pulling at his pipe.

"It's different when Betty does it," declared Emily in perfect good faith, "Betty's not afraid of Miss

Walker or of anyone. She does not do it to screen herself."

"I only said I didn't draw the picture," protested the sneak in the safe shelter of Carlyon's arms, "and I didn't draw it."

"I drew it," said Betty. "I came to tell you. Miss Walker will have to go now. When they complain to father they're done for. He puts up with them when they try to be amusing; he hides when they run after him with umbrellas and sticks; but when they go to him and say that *unless* an alteration is made in the behavior of the children—*you* know how they go on—father puts up his hands to his head, and says, 'Oh go, my good woman! go. For Heaven's sake, go!'"

The imitation of the elder's irritable and worried manner was excellent, and Carlyon laughed.

"How many does this make in the last year?" he asked.

Betty shook her head quickly. "We don't count them, and don't you count them, please, Billy," she said.

"You'll be punished, you know, and you deserve it, Betty."

"Then they shouldn't make love to my father," said Betty.

"They shouldn't make love to our father," echoed the two smaller girls.

"We hate all women," said Betty, "men are nicer. I shall hate myself when I am a woman, only I shall be of a sensibler kind. I shall never wear my petticoats longer than my calves, and I shall always keep my hair hanging down my back."

"Won't Betty look a darling?" inquired the in-

gratiating Ian. "Cousin Violet looked a darling till she stuck up her hair, and now she's frightful."

"Billy's in love with Violet," said Emily, with her dove-like temerity. "I know, because Susan told me when she put me to bed."

"Susan's an ass," said Billy. "Your confounded Paulie is creeping down the back of my neck, Ian," he said. He had turned very red and cross, and no wonder, with the kitten in that position! "Now, be off, all of you, and leave me in peace. I've got my sermon to write."

"Don't do it," advised Betty, unmovedly keeping her ground, "don't preach one. Everyone would be awfully glad. We can't go, Billy. You asked us to tea our first holiday. We've come."

"Tea isn't for hours."

"Tea could be."

"We'll wait till Caroline comes in."

"No, no. We don't want Caroline. Only you. Me to make the tea—and only you!"

"Betty to make the tea," said the others, "and only Billy!"

Of course they had their way. What could a young man, kind as a woman and simple as a child, do against the tyranny of the imperious woman-child and her satellites?

"It was you who spoilt me," Betty used to reproach him in after years. "You should have beaten me daily, and have shown me what a selfish, domineering beast I was. I hadn't even a notion of it in those days. You should have told me."

But to have been stern and repressive was as impossible to the man as to be yielding and self-forgetful to the child: and so Betty's education, so far as it

lay in the curate's hand, was neglected, and Betty went on to her appointed end.

The mistress of the house being away, the children did not as usual confine themselves to the study, but ran riot over house and garden. The two younger ones made at length a temporary settlement in the kitchen, presided over by Hannah, a dragoon of a woman with a manish figure and a moustache, of whom the rest of the village stood in awe.

"Master, he do have the patience of Jobe along o' them children, for sure," Hannah was wont to say; but Hannah, herself, in spite of a temper as formidable as her moustache, was generally patient with them, too. She placed them now on two little stools before the fire and set them to make buttered toast for tea.

Betty in the study had climbed the library steps and pulled from the topmost shelf of the bookcase, where Hannah had vainly endeavored to hide them out of her reach, a heap of unbound numbers of *Punch*. She sat on the top of the steps with the papers on her lap, letting the leaves of each number flutter to the ground as she proceeded with the next.

"I shall draw this kind of pictures myself when I'm older," she announced without lifting her eyes from the page. "Only I shall want some one to think up the jokes to put underneath."

"Perhaps, by the time you're old enough to do the illustrations, you'll have thought up one or two yourself," the curate said with a grin.

He watched her for a minute, dimnly conscious, all inartistic as he was, of the pretty picture she made perched upon his library steps, her vivid face and

flaming hair shining out of the dark corner of the room like an old portrait from its sombre background.

"Did you choose your 'pinny' to match your hair, Betty?" he inquired.

The color of the abundant, crisply curling hair was a sore subject with the eldest little Jervois. The kitchen prejudice against a shade of red in the tresses is well known, and Betty's critics had been mostly from that region. She shot an angry glance from eyes greenly grey in the sunlight, but black as night when shining from that shadowy corner upon the young man.

"My hair is the color of my cousin Violet's," she declared.

"Hers is five shades darker," protested the curate. "Yours is a match with the head of Carrotty Parkin's that blows the organ. I asked him yesterday why he didn't get a wife, and he said none would have him because of the color of his hair. He was very sad about it, poor chap. He said he'd asked dozens. I expect you'll meet with the same rebuffs."

Betty gave him an evil glance; "Ladies don't have to ask. Didn't you even know that? Were you waiting for one to ask you? Gentlemen go down on their knees to them and clasp their hands and say: 'Oh, my dear Violet, won't you be my bride?'"

"And she smiles down at him," pursued the curate hurriedly, "and says, 'how much have you got, sir.' And he replies 'I have ninety pounds a year, and a house rent free, and an inordinate love of 'baccy, and a pig of a red-head Fiend, called Betty, who—'"

Betty broke in remorselessly, upon his unwontedly imaginative discourse; she propped her elbow on the remaining *Punches* on her knee and laid her chin in

her hand, and looked at the young man with considering eyes.

"You aren't really in love with Violet, are you?" she asked, confidentially. "I said to Susan you'd have told me if you had been."

"Asked your consent first, of course."

"Then why do you turn red when her name is mentioned? That's what I want to ask you. That's what I said to Cousin Violet; I said, 'if he isn't in love with you—and I know he isn't—why does he look so ridiculous?'"

The curate laughed uncomfortably. "To which flattering well chosen speech what did Miss Belton reply?" he inquired.

But Betty had not burdened her memory with the reply. "Violet's not clever a bit," she said. "I think she's silly. If I was a man I wouldn't fall in love with a silly. It's worse than anything. It's worse than—"

"A carrotty head," young Carlyon said. "Enough of the tender passion. Come down. If you are going to have tea, it's time you had it, and went home."

CHAPTER II.

THE CURATE'S FRIEND.

When the curate and his sister went across to the Rectory to dine that evening, they found Edward Harringay already established there. Mr. Jervois, who had driven into Edmundsbury, had brought the young man back to dine and sleep. He had been a school and college friend of William Carlyon's, and Mr. Jervois counted it a happy thought to have secured him as fourth at the dinner-table.

He was a man on whom exalted hopes had been built; he said of himself with a cynical cheerfulness, probably assumed, that he had consistently disappointed them all. He was bound to be a failure through other peoples' extravagant ambition rather than his own fault. It had been just as well to do it thoroughly while he was about it, he declared. Neither at the private school at Edmundsbury, among the quite ordinary small boys of his native place had he distinguished himself, nor at Marlborough, nor at Balliol. "Quite t'other," as he admitted without apparent regret, when talking the matter over. He had declined to enter the office of his father, a solicitor in large practice; he had no leaning to any of the other professions. He had no definite ambitions in fact. He said of himself that he also had neither enthusiasms nor illusions; but it is to be hoped that, being a young man and not a monster, this declaration was at least premature.

He had a taste for art, but he had never wished to take seriously to the career of an artist. His pictures showed so much talent that his people took him for a genius, and said of him that he would acquire a great name; but he himself knew that he should accomplish nothing, nor did he greatly desire to do so. He had been living in Paris for a couple of years, studying art, his parents believed; but beyond the two or three half-finished sketches his mother found among his belongings on his return he had nothing to show for the outcome. These sketches, duly framed and assigned places of honor by maternal pride, he sternly deposed and banished to the lumber-room. About himself—his own power, and the worth of his productions he at least had no illusions. Having them he would probably have been a better, certainly a more successful man. Of rather more than medium height, he had the appearance of great physical strength, being heavy in the shoulder, long in the arm, deep in the chest. And in his face there was a promise of strength which his character seemed to belie—that look of strength being merely its only attraction. He was of a very dark complexion, and he wore his straight black hair longer than was considered desirable at that period. His eyes were of a pale grey green, having small beauty of their own, and ordinarily none of expression, they grew a thought too close to his nose, which was big and fleshy; his lips were straight and thin, and lifted themselves a little at one corner when he smiled, showing his white and even teeth.

Such as he was he was lying back comfortably in his chair in the rectory study on that evening when the Carlyons came to dine.

There was a rustle among the curtains in the window, and the rectory children, denuded of scarlet overalls, now irreproachable in black frocks and white muslin pinafores, crept forth.

"Now be off! Be off!" cried their father. He stood up with his back to the fireplace, and waved the children to the door. The look of irritable worry so familiar to his family usurped the politely attentive expression of his melancholy face. "Betty, what are you doing here? Take your sisters away."

The smaller children at once made for the door, Betty confronted her father from her stand by the curate's knee.

"Mayn't she stay, Mr. Jervois?" pleaded the weak young man.

"She has been very naughty," said the rector. "She is under punishment. Miss Walker has complained to me. I must be allowed to punish my own children, Bill. She is to go to bed."

"I won't go to bed," said Betty.

Miss Carlyon opened shocked eyes of surprise with a remonstrative "My dear Betty!" The curate muttering "Idiot!" under his breath, endeavored to shake the child into reasonableness. Harringay turned his head and looked at the rebel with lifted lip.

"Miss Walker is a beast," said Betty.

"I'm sure she's a beast if the little one says so," Harringay said in his gentle voice, turning indifferently back to his host, "Your little girl's far too pretty to be mistaken."

"It is all an intolerable worry to me," said the rector—"an intolerable worry!" He half turned, and took from the mantelpiece behind him the sheet of

schoolroom paper which had been laid in the governess's place. "Whatever Miss Walker may be, she must be treated as a lady while in my house—she mustn't be insulted, or ridiculed, or——"

He had fitted his eyeglasses upon his nose and was peering at the picture. Betty, watching him intently, saw a smile twitching the corner of his mouth. She gave a sigh of relief and sat down on the arm of the curate's chair.

The drawing was passed on to Miss Carlyon for inspection, who regarded it and then the artist with a solemn face of sorrowful disapproval, and a reiterated "My dear Betty!" Harringay looked at the sketch then took it in his hand. His face lit up with amusement. "I call it uncommonly clever," he said. He glanced quickly at the child, and then back to the paper in his hand and gave a short pleased laugh. "I declare it is uncommonly clever."

"How wrong of you! How wicked to encourage her," said Miss Carlyon in the low voice of admonition, and the rector, recalled to a sense of duty, once more, and with all the emphasis roused by contradiction, ordered his daughter off to bed.

Betty, once on the wrong side of the door, whither she was escorted with the curate's arm about her shoulder, shook a vindictive fist in the direction of that young man's sister:

"I hate her," said Betty through grinding little teeth, "I hate her worse than the Walker woman."

The rector was sighing miserably upon the hearth-rug.

"They are all very kind to me," he said, "Miss Walker and the other long line of ladies she has succeeded. They wait on me with galoshes and slippers

and—as you see—umbrellas—attention I could dispense with. But the weightier matters of caring for my children and delivering me from incessant annoyances they altogether omit. Betty has to be sent to bed. It is a little hard on me, I think. But she is getting quite beyond me—quite beyond me."

He sighed again. Then he bent down and peered once more at the crude performance Harringay was still smiling over.

"Poor Miss Walker ran down to remind me of my umbrella. There she is, you see—there she is!" he said pointing with irrepressible pride to the presentment of the lady.

"And here are you," said Harringay, with a chuckle. "Your face is hidden but I should have known the back of you, anywhere. Look at the eagerness to escape expressed by the flying coat tails! It is wonderfully funny!"

"That is evidently an umbrella, but what is the object in the poor lady's other hand?" wondered the near-sighted rector.

"Those—those are your galoshes," his curate assured him, unblushingly.

It was quite evident to the three guests that the article with which Miss Walker was pursuing the retreating figure of the rector was that lady's chaste unsullied heart.

When dinner was over, and Miss Carlyon had retired to the drawing-room, where the ill-used governess and her woes awaited her, there came a rustling and a scampering, whose import was well-known to the Reverend William Carlyon, outside the dining-room door. He got up presently and went into the hall and found the two younger children awaiting

him on the stairs—two pretty, active little figures, eager for their woman's game of eluding him when he pursued, and rushing after him when he turned away.

For a little while longer the rector and Harringay bored each other over the dining-table,—neither was a man of many words and one of them suffered from a paucity of ideas,—then Harringay roused by a shout of laughter from the children followed by the discreeter cachinations of their good-natured playfellow, also made his way to the hall. Carlyon, thrusting his hand between the banister-rails was endeavoring, and pretending to endeavor, to catch the flying feet as they passed up and down the stairs. Harringay looked on, leaning against the dining-room door, his cigar in his mouth.

"Where's the little artist?" he asked at last. "Where's my pretty friend of the copper-colored hair?"

"Betty's in bed," Emily explained. "She hated going, only she wanted to punish father. He told her to go and she's gone, and that will make father most awf'ly unhappy."

"You have proved mercifully disobedient lest his trouble should be greater than he could bear?" questioned the indifferent young man.

Then a door which had stood ajar on the landing above opened and a ruddy head and pale eager little face emerged into the dim light of the stairway.

"I didn't go to bed," Betty informed the rest in a loud whisper. "I only pretended. Pretending does as well sometimes."

"Often," acquiesced Harringay. He removed his

shoulder from the dining-room door, sprang up a stair or two and sat down by Betty's side. He had no particular love for children, but he loved a charming picture—and the dining-table with its local topics, and the poor rector's ill suppressed yawns, were so deadly dull.

So that during the ten minutes or so that William Carlyon and the giggling Emily skirmished in the hall, that Ian sat with black-stockinged fat legs pushed through the rails of the banisters, gurgling over her efforts to entrap the curate's head between her dangling feet, Edward Harringay and Betty Jervois had their first talk.

The talk was principally on the side of the child. Mr. Harringay had called her pretty, he had praised her drawing. A person so discriminating must be very clever and dear. He would understand her, he would be amused, he would admire. Hitherto, all her heart had been given to the young curate with the long slim body, the rough tow-colored hair, the red, red cheeks, and the boyish eyes of blue. She had been furiously jealous of his attentions to her sisters, had resented each caress bestowed on Ian as an injury to herself.

"He is *my* friend," she had declared in the tone which, with Betty meant, "hands off!" and the other children had refrained from making like claim upon the young man, knowing full well that they would have to pay for such presumption.

But Billy had never said that she was pretty—she, in fact, had had no idea that such was the case until she had heard Harringay's epoch-making speech that evening—Billy had not troubled to admire her drawings. Ian and Emily were welcome to Billy for the

present. It was to this charming and discerning person she made over her allegiance.

Her tongue ran on without hesitation; she was inspired to give him her whole confidence, and to put him in possession of all the details of her life and character, to relate to him all her fancies and aspirations at once.

So she leaned contentedly against him as they sat on the stairs and told him of her hatred of Miss Carlyon who was so good—didn't he also dislike good people? They were always so detestable!—and so ugly—oh, so ugly!—of her resolution never to submit to the rule of a governess who made love to "father"—and they all made love to him—of her love for Mr. Chipling, the long-haired terrier and her determination that he should sleep on her bed, on which subject she and Susan, the children's maid, had come to fisticuffs that very night. She told him of her cousin Violet, who had been nice once but had become horrid since she was "a grown up," she told him of Carlyon's habit of growing red when Violet's name was mentioned. It couldn't be that he was in love with her, she hastened to add, because Violet was such a noodle. Did Mr. Harringay think it possible that anyone could fall in love with a noodle?

To Harringay's inquiry as to whether she knew what a funny, pretty and clever little girl she was, she replied that Susan in the nursery thought the color of her hair hideous and always scolded when the comb broke in the tangles. That Billy Carlyon had told her she was like Carrotty Parkins who blew the organ and said that no one would ever marry her. That she was not, however, at all desirous of the marriage state as she meant to live with Billy Carlyon

himself and draw for *Punch* when she grew up. Finally that she intended to be rid of Miss Walker at an early date, and would spare no pains, nor know any scruples while working toward that result.

And in this last matter she was allowed to see early of the travail of her soul.

CHAPTER III.

VIOLET BELTON.

At Easter Miss Walker departed, wrath in her soul, resentment in her demeanor, fiery disdain in the glance thrown toward the little figures watching eagerly at the schoolroom window to see her off.

Then that happened which always happened in each interregnum 'twixt governess and governess since Mrs. Jervois's death, Violet came.

Violet Belton, the rector's niece, was the daughter of a clergyman at Edmundsbury, whose purse was lean and quiver full. She was shy, retiring, pretty, but in such an ineffective, unimpressive way, that her charms generally failed to make their due impression. She was conscious to the finger tips of the curate's approving glance, scarcely daring to believe in his admiration, yet secretely desirous of it, taking as much pains to elude the man she wished to meet in village, lane, or garden as other girls would have used for a lure. In the hands of the children she came to control she was quite helpless, failing ignominiously in her timid efforts at coercion, her opinions flouted, her authority laughed to scorn—a slave where she should have been a mistress. Yet all such rebuffs she treated with a sweet humility, with a gentle, unconscious dignity, which constituted in the curate's mind her not least considerable charm.

Her uncle, a man extremely anxious to find the surface of things unruffled, and naturally averse from

inquiring into the depths beneath, was well content to have the girl at the rectory. The children were so happy that they kept out of mischief, he supposed, out of his way, he knew. There was no ugly, ill-bred woman to sit opposite him at meals, to pursue him with attentions at which his children laughed, to force him to maintain a silence he felt to be impolite, or to embark on a conversation which irked him. "I think we have given the governess scheme a fair trial, and have proved conclusively that it won't answer," he said, talking the matter over with Miss Carlyon a day or two after Violet's arrival. "For the future the children must learn what they can from their cousin."

But the lady by no means approved: "Children require a firm hand," she said. "They want a person over them whom they can respect—fear a little, even, as well as love."

"Yes, yes," the rector, dolefully appreciative, acquiesced. He had heard it all before. In each succeeding governess he had hoped to find Caroline Carlyon's ideal. "It is easy enough to talk, but where is that kind of person to be found?" poor Mr. Jervois cried.

Caroline may have thought she knew very well, but she said nothing. It was inconceivable that he did not feel—here was such a person, ready to his hand, made for the post; but the idea of filling his dead wife's place had not entered the rector's head, would never enter it, Miss Carlyon said: who was of far too reserved and self-respecting a nature to put it there.

"If you keep Violet Belton with you Betty should be sent to school," the sensible woman said.

But the rector had an even greater objection to

boarding schools, than to governesses, it seemed; and his curate who came into the room at this point of the conversation advanced the argument that it would be very little use sending the child to a boarding school as she certainly would never go.

"My dear!" his sister said, she gazed at him reprovingly with her serious eyes. She was a good-looking woman of little more than thirty, with smooth, dark hair brushed plainly on each side of her narrow forehead, her regular featured, delicate tinted face terminating in an over-long and pointed chin. "My dear! the child would go if her father wished it."

"I allow no insubordination," said the rector, pulling himself up, with an angry glance in Carlyon's direction.

"She'd break her heart," the curate declared.

His sister smiled superior. "Nonsense, dear," she said, "Betty is very much like other girls, I expect."

But the father resented this classification of his eldest, naughtiest daughter. "She is a fine character," he said, "Betty's is a very fine character."

It was young Carlyon who had pointed out that fact to his rector on an occasion when Betty's delinquencies had been under consideration, and Mr. Jervois had accepted the assertion with unquestioning faith. "Her mother had a beautiful character," he added now, and fell into the abstracted silence which always followed the mention of his dead wife's name.

The consequence of Violet Belton's installation at the rectory anyone could have foreseen. There wanted but opportunity to repress the shy liking which already existed between them into a warmer feeling, and it was inevitable that the girl and the curate should fall in love. She was so pretty and yielding, and

sweet, and at such an impressionable age. Elegible too, all things considered. At his father's death he would inherit a modest little fortune, and he was not even now dependent on his curate's stipend. He was of good family, too, and connected with influential people. There was every hope of early promotion for Billy Carlyon.

Even the rector, a by no means observant person, awoke to the aspect of the case, and took occasion to mention before his curate in a happily casual way that Violet would have nothing but her pretty face to her fortune.

As for Betty, Peter, her brother was at home for the Easter holidays. If the sun would only shine and she could keep Peter at her side, Betty did not for the time trouble greatly about anything besides.

So that the lovers, both overwhelmed with shyness, horribly conscious of each other's presence, and if a word passed in public between them, feeling the forces of the universe stand a-pause to listen, had a fearfully joyful time. There were laboriously accidental meetings in the lanes or the village street, there were slow pacings of the garden paths, searchings in meadows and beneath hedge-rows for violets and primroses, fit emblems of such youthful, natural and modest loves; there were rather silent but delightful half-hours in the schoolroom, with Emily and Ian, too busy over the dolls to which they always returned when deserted by Betty, to interrupt.

It had been ordained that the Reverend William Carlyon should sing at the approaching village concert. The young man's ear was slightly defective, and he had no voice to speak of, but he was so accustomed to be made use of without reference to his per-

sonal inclination or advantage, that he did not dream of objecting. It would not be the first time he had made an ass of himself in public, he reflected, and was the less averse from the ordeal as Miss Belton had undertaken his musical rehearsals.

They were holding one on an afternoon in the schoolroom when Edward Harringay made one of his rather frequent appearances at the rectory.

"Go on—go on," Violet, at the piano, had commanded, looking up at her tall young pupil over her shoulder, as the door opened to admit the newcomer. And Billy, contenting himself with a wink at his friend, by way of greeting, proceeded obediently with his song.

Harringay shook hands silently with Miss Carlyon, sitting, bonnetted, her gloves in her bare hands in the window, then took up his place on the hearthrug, and regarded the pair at the piano with a kind of gloomy interest.

"Yes. You must try it over again," Violet said. She, like so many sweet-faced women, had a sweet voice of her own, and was musical. She was at her ease, therefore, and not at all shy over this subject. "Just that bit where it goes down—down, do you see—like this," humming it softly as she looked up at him. "Do you see? Once more please."

"If you really wish it," Carlyon said. "But it's a little rough on Harringay, who—"

"Oh, don't mind me. Cut away, Bill," said the young man on the hearthrug. He was struck by the fact that the girl at the piano was unconscious of, or entirely indifferent to his presence. She was so engrossed with Billy Carlyon that she had positively forgotten a second man was there. He was not used

to be forgotten. He was not annoyed at all, but surprised in spite of himself, and interested.

While the song proceeded, his gaze at Violet, which had ever before been careless enough, grew fixed.

She was a very pretty object in her simple dark blue dress of simplest make, the afternoon sun shining on her soft hair and lending it a warmth to vie with Betty's own. He noticed how daintily the small head was placed on the slim throat, how graceful were the shoulders in spite of the girlish droop which Violet's mother so much regretted. From where he stood he could see only one slight and delicate hand, and he noticed the wrist, where it emerged from the closely gathered, loose sleeve, was beautifully moulded. The pure and lily-type of womanhood was not Harringay's ideal, but he also was at an impressionable age—and was not all beauty adorable?

Nearing that perilous passage of which the curate's rendering had been so glaringly defective, Violet looked up at the young man, breathless, her innocent eyes full of anxious encouragement. That look unnerved the singer, perhaps, for he floundered for a minute in a confusion of wrong notes, and broke down, laughing and blushing. But another voice took up the passage, a voice fuller and truer and clearer, than poor Bill's defective organ, and sang the phrase to the end.

> "My life's bright light was quenched in pain,
> And you were dead to me!"

As the last note died away, Violet turned slowly on her music stool, and looked at the singer with a mild wonder on her face, as if here were something beautiful and strange which she had not seen before.

"Why, how well you sing?" said Miss Carlyon from the window.

"Oh, Ted's a first-rater at it. Didn't you know before?" the curate inquired, looking proudly upon his friend. "I shan't want to make an ass of myself on the nineteenth now, Miss Belton. You must get Harringay to come and do it instead."

That mild wonder was still shining in Violet's eyes, Harringay's met it as his own looked back at her.

"Oh, will you please, please, please come and sing?" she asked, childishly eager, "Mr. Carlyon has not put it very nicely,—but do come! I have been in despair for men's voices and I never once even thought of you."

"Then you must be punished," Harringay declared with gravity, "When ladies omit to think of me they must be punished."

"Oh, Mr. Harringay, you won't be so cruel!"

"Under cruel treatment I can be very cruel indeed, Miss Belton."

"But are we all to suffer for Miss Belton's misdeeds?" Caroline inquired with a prim contempt for such trifling. "Sing us something now, Mr. Harringay."

"And fight out the concert business afterwards," the curate suggested.

"Certainly I will sing if Miss Carlyon wishes it," Harringay said. He sat down to the piano, accompanying himself, and sang several so-called comic songs in vogue that season. He sang that plaintive ditty which tells how the Fatherland—the happy Fatherland—was to dispense with the services of its sons when once they escape over to England, he waxed eloquent over the history of his first cigar—his very first cigar—

Betty came in with her brother and took up her stand by the side of the piano and stared with a puzzled frown into the singer's face: "Why didn't you do that before?" she inquired.

"Sing us something more worthy of your voice," Miss Carlyon pleaded.

"Give them 'To Anthea,'" said Bill.

But he would sing only to Betty who did not quite know if to approve him in this unsuspected *rôle*. And he had soon finished. Quite well he understood the wisdom of letting your audience long for more.

"Do you know that you are very perverse?" Miss Carlyon inquired when presently he held out his hand to her in farewell.

He smiled upon her as she spoke, and she, observing him with awakened interest, because of that unsuspected gift of song, noticed for the first time how peculiar was his smile, and how his pale eyes glittered into beauty beneath the black brows in its light.

"I will sing for you when and where you like and for as long as you like," he said. "But I will not sing for Miss Belton because she has been unkind to me and has hurt my pride."

"I thought him a plain young man, and he is, when one looks at him, not at all plain," said Caroline, as the door closed upon the visitor. "He must be a delightful person. He has music in his soul. I have a pet theory of my own, Bill, that truly musical people must be good."

"I have heard it before, and I hope the converse doesn't hold good, for my own sake," said the poor curate, a little ruefully. "Miss Belton is looking very sad and serious. Do you think my morals are as bad as my music, Miss Belton?"

"I cannot think how I have been unkind," said Violet, wistfully, looking with puzzled appealing eyes upon them all. "What can have made Mr. Harringay so displeased with me?"

"He was rotting you," Peter called out. "Women never know when men are rotting them." The youth was lying prone on the hearthrug; he did not condescend to lift his rough head from the book he was reading as he favored the company with this elucidation, but he raised his legs, one after the other, bending them at the knee, and letting his toes dig into the pile of the carpet as he dropped each heavily in turn. Miss Carlyon eyed his posture with displeasure, but the rest of his surroundings accepted the fact that Peter must lie on his stomach when he was at home for the holidays, and that it would be unnatural for him having legs not to kick with them.

"That Harringay is a conceited beast, else he'd have sung when he was wanted to," he added.

"You shut up!" cried Betty, glaring fiercely. "What do you know about it? I suppose if he doesn't want to sing sentimental songs to Violet it's no business of yours. If I was a man I wouldn't. Nothing would make me be such a silly."

This with a contemptuous glance at Bill, gazing with all his heart in his eyes at the girl upon the music-stool. He was so tender over her that he could not endure, unmoved, to see the least shadow upon her face.

"It was only Harringay's nonsense," he said reassuringly. "If you aren't tired of it, shall we try 'Summer and Winter' once again? I don't mind making an ass of myself for the good of my country now and again, Betty."

CHAPTER IV.

BETTY MAKES A CONFIDENCE.

But after that occasion when his presence had been temporarily overlooked, and when the afternoon sun had shone tenderly upon Violet's head at the piano, and when she had happened to look up with innocent eyes of proprietorship into William Carlyon's face, Harringay was always turning up at Blow Weston.

It seemed natural and pleasant to have him there. He made no special demands on the time or patience of any particular person. No one found that he came too often. He rode over to the rectory for lunch, and Mr. Jervois always brightened at his presence. If the two men had nothing in common, the elder at least never found it out. To the children he was never what Bill Carlyon was—half slave—half master. He never put himself out of his way to talk to them, or play with them, or draw them out. But Betty had declared that he was a perfect person of whom nothing but good was to be said. It was held therefore by inviolable schoolroom law that Ted Harringay was as handsome and clever as he was good. Peter, it is true, proved refractory now and then, and generally declined to take "the chap Harringay" to his heart. But Peter, as Betty did not hesitate to explain to him, had never nice manners and always managed to like the wrong people. And Peter soon went back to school.

And at the Carlyons' abode—"Queen Anne's Cottage" as it was called, out of compliment to the society which had helped the curate's residence into existence, Harringay became very much at home. The good-natured young host, finding that he liked to come, had given a general invitation to his old college friend. As for Caroline, not an expansive or effusive character at all, she took it into her head that it was she who had first discovered him to be a person of interest. Ideas once admitted to her brain were safe from expulsion, and she looked upon the young man as her especial protegé, the fact being that when Harringay, for reasons of the moment, cared to make a good impression, his efforts were invariably crowned with success. One night when the visitor had been about to start from Queen Anne's for his eight miles ride, Miss Carlyon had discovered that the weather was extremely unpropitious. A room had therefore been hurriedly prepared for him, which, afterwards, he as often occupied as not. He had no duties calling him elsewhere, no law but that of his own wish and will to follow, and, during the months of the spring and summer, he was content to idle away his time in the quiet country spot.

He made a water-color sketch of Caroline Carlyon with which even the politest of his critics could not pretend gratification; and, at the child's urgent request, he undertook to paint Betty Jervois in oils. In spite of her enthusiasm for art, however, Betty made a bad sitter, and speedily became disgusted with the slow fashion in which her face grew beneath the artist's hand. Besides which, it did not appear to the child that Harringay who had called her pretty intended to do her justice.

"My hair does not stick out like a burning bush around my head," she declared disgustedly, "And I'm ever so much a fatter kind of a child. And why couldn't you have done me in my best frock, instead of that frightful red pinafore."

Something of her disgust communicated itself to the sensitive artist nature, perhaps, for Harringay worked only fitfully upon the picture. He, without a word of apology to the sitter, would fling down his brushes and would join Violet and the younger children over their croquet on the lawn, at which game Paul, the kitten, and Chip, the fat terrier, were also supposed to play, Ian and Emily conscientiously undertaking to knock the balls assigned to those animals through the hoops as well as their own, a proceeding which prolonged the game beyond convenient limits. Or he would sit in the deck chair under the cedar to watch the curate and Violet play their daily "single" at tennis, a match in which victory was never to the swift nor the race to the strong, as Carlyon, who was the best player of the neighborhood and for several miles around on these occasions always contrived to be beaten. At another time, Harringay being seized with an unaccustomed fit of enthusiasm at work upon his picture awing Betty into silence by the pre-occupation of his manner and the light that at such rare moments was in his almost colorless eyes, in would come Violet gently stealing. She would seat herself at the piano and play some of those propitiatory soft melodies which seemed to suit her personality so well.

Then good-bye to the portrait in oils! Out would come the sketchbook, half filled already with the face, full, quarter, three-quarter, down bent, meeting the

gaze with wistfully appealing eyes, or looking devotionally upward, of Miss Belton.

Perhaps it was because Violet's subjects were so limited, and because Harringay, for his part, was so sensitive about boring his hearers on themes in which they were not interested, or through laziness, or constraint, or want of material, that conversation was apt to languish between the lady at the piano and the artist with the sketchbook; even to die embarrassingly away. A subject always ready to hand is not lightly to be parted with under these conditions, and Harringay chose to cling to that convenient, manufactured grievance of his with mock seriousness still, a seriousness Violet never dreamed of doubting. She received his reproaches with a great solemnity, and her bearing toward him always evinced an anxious desire to atone for that slight she was accused of having shown him.

"What a baby she is, in spite of her twenty years," he said to Caroline Carlyon. He was rather fond at this period of making people talk about Miss Belton. "She really is not a fair match for the smallest imp in the Jervois' household."

"I often wish her more matured," the mature Caroline would avow.

"Wishing, fortunately, won't do it. She will never grow older. I can picture her as sweet, as tractable, as easily duped and taken in at seventy as she is today, and very nearly as pretty. I would not have her altered by so much as a hair of her head."

"Of course I am interested in her, as Bill appears so seriously interested," Miss Carlyon confessed. "I could have wished that Bill had waited longer, and seen further first, but—"

"Oh, don't wish anything of the sort," Bill's friend implored. "You, who are so devout, ought to thank God for the spectacle of anything so natural and beautiful as their love making. On his part unquestioning adoration and devotion, on hers an unconscious submission to the old irresistible law drawing the woman to the man. Their marriage will be an ideal one. He will give himself, body and soul, unhesitating, to her—and he is a good fellow: while to her he will be more than mere lord and master—as one of the sons of God."

"Well, really, how ridiculous! I hope not," Caroline said.

And then, Bill, with his boyish head, not very well carried as yet on the shoulders that were too slight for his height, his long loose-hanging legs, his general look of immaturity and lack of finish, came in and put an end to the conversation. Certainly there was nothing of the demigod in the appearance of Bill Carlyon.

"Isn't Violet a stupid?"

Harringay was lying back in his chair on the rectory lawn, his hands clasped behind his uncovered head, his face turned up to the fresh blue and white of the May day sky, and Betty had brought her long-haired terrier in her arms and squatted on the grass alongside. For opening up of conversation she had put the above query.

"I think her as stupid as an owl," she added.

Because he was not desirous of the child's companionship just then he let the remark pass in silence.

She was accustomed to a cavalier treatment from him which she would not have endured for an instant from her older friend, the much-sat-upon curate, and

in spite of the absence of encouragement she presently pursued her theme.

"She takes in all you say to her," she went on, "I know at once when you are only playing, but Violet never knows. She quite believes you are angry with her about—you know what."

Betty looked up at the unresponsive gentleman above her, at the dark complexioned face whose irregularity of feature did not always please the beholder, and whose expression was not often either frank or encouraging—not a face children found attractive, as a rule. But Betty loved to look upon it, many a time she had tried to draw it in her clever, untaught way; it was a face that lent itself easily to caricature, but to make a pleasing presentment, as Betty wished, was beyond the power of her untutored pencil. Still she always had the matter in her mind and was never tired of studying the original with a view to the copy that some day must "come better."

"His eyes have no color, only light," she said to herself now, gazing with eager inquiry into Harringay's narrowed orbs, and storing up that fact for future consideration in her mind.

The fashion in which the black hair was parted low on one side and brushed in a long sweep above the forehead particularly commended itself to Betty. "Billy can't have his so because it's short and towy, and curls, but I shall certainly have Peter do his hair that way when he grows up," she said to herself, and dragged "Mr. Chipling" closer to Harringay's chair.

The man grew tired of his own thoughts after a time and looked down into the attentive face of the child.

"Why aren't you at lessons, pray?" he inquired.

"It is not a lessony sort of day, is it? The sun came in, and we all felt we really couldn't."

"Why do you trouble to say 'we all?' Why not 'I' frankly and at once? There is a weak subterfuge about the phrase which is not in character."

She looked away from his face to Mr. Chipling's ears, with which she was playing, being not quite sure how to answer him.

"About what does Violet think I am angry?"

She looked up quickly: "I call that subterfugeous," she said, "because you know quite well. You are always teasing her about it. And once you teased her so much that after you were gone she cried. Fancy wearing your hair done up, and being such a baby as to cry! Even Emily doesn't cry now. Not often."

"Poor wretch! Rather not! Emily's sister is too much of a Spartan to approve of tears."

"Only Ian cries a little, sometimes, but she always hides up to do it. And Violet is twenty!"

"And Violet cried!" the young man said. His face had lightened in that peculiarly vivid manner, which, as Miss Carlyon had discovered, made it so attractive; the narrow, deep-set grey eyes shone and sparkled like jewels hid in caves, and Betty noticed how soft and dreamy was his voice. She considered him wistfully for a few minutes. She had thought he would have despised weeping women as she did. It was abundantly evident he did no such thing. The discovery gave her courage to make a confidence she would not otherwise have dreamed possible.

"I cried last night," she told him on the impulse of the moment in a shamed voice that shook a little. She waited, expecting to see him overcome by the

stupendous announcement, but Harringay carefully concealed his emotion. "Emily and Ian forget," she went on, "but I am older—I never forget. Last night the church bells rang; and someone walked upon the gravel beneath my window. I could hear their voices—soft, you know—and the crunch, crunch of their feet. I don't know why that has such a melancholy sound."

"Billy Carlyon and your cousin Violet spooning out in the moonlight, I suppose," Harringay remarked, gruff, perhaps, through excess of sympathy.

But Betty would not be diverted from her own affairs. "I cry at that kind of sorrowful thing since my mamma died," she explained, almost in a whisper.

From the day of her death, Betty Jervois had scarcely been heard to mention her mother's name. She had shrunk from the word on other lips as from a touch on an open wound. This acutest stage of grief past, and the longing rising within her to speak of what was still the most intimate thought of her heart, lo, no one cared to listen, or seemed to care—no one understood!

Her father was kind and indulgent—more from the indolence of his nature than from its affectionateness, as Betty well understood without knowing that she understood it. Not the kind of father that could ever be something of a mother too. The other children seemed to have wept away their grief before the mould had fallen on the mother's coffin. Ian had danced with delight because she had been promoted to stockings on the funeral day. Betty had never forgiven it. The servants with whom they had been much thrown had held up the dead mother as a kind of bogey to the refractory eldest child.

"What would your poor ma say if she knowed what a bad girl you've growed into, Miss Betty?" or "Don't you make no mistake, your ma's lookin' down on you, Miss Betty! Don't you ever go to think she's covered in her grave, and don't know what a messy girl you are wi' your pinnyfores, and how you're that cheeky, folks are driven to slap your face!"

How could Betty confide the history of that frequent tear-wetted pillow to such as these?

She had thought of telling Billy how sad her heart was at times, and how, even when she was at her very naughtiest, she longed for her mother. But Billy would tell Violet, and Betty had posed as a giant of self-possession to Violet.

But Mr. Harringay! He had praised her drawings, he thought her clever and pretty. Perhaps he would understand this strange sadness of hers. She thought that to him, alone, in the world, she could bear to speak of her mother, to tell him how pretty she was, and how her eldest daughter had never been in disgrace in her time, but had been always petted and loved and admired. He would never tell, and since he was such a generally comprehending person he would understand. She looked at him with eyes that besought him for sympathy and comfort—if he had only noticed the expression.

"Since my mamma died—" began Betty again, falteringly.

A figure in a pink cotton dress, belted at the slim waist, with white collar and cuffs turning back from slender wrists and throat, appeared at the drawing-room window, threw up the sash, leaned out into the sunlight. Tones of agonized remonstrance floated across to the two on the lawn.

Harringay, in the deck chair beneath the cedar, stared into alert attention.

Ian's black kitten, stretched to the utmost inch on the warm gravel before the window, watched with an eye that boded no good to its object, a half-fledged sparrow fallen from its nest.

Violet was so intent on the fate of the bird,—so engaged in placing before Paul arguments against the killing and eating of the hapless fledgling—that she did not see Harringay advancing over the grass. She gave a start and a cry when he stood before her, and Paul, stretching a swift stealthy paw, made short work of the sparrow.

"I'm so sorry if I startled you," Harringay said, in tones so gentle that Violet's heart stood still, and she thought no one had ever heard the like.

Betty looked after the pair within the drawing-room, receding from the window, "He never even heard!" she said.

She must be loyal above all things. It could not be that he had heard and had not cared! But her lip quivered, and she knew that she would never attempt to make to anyone that confidence again.

She ran across to the gravel where the kitten lay in the sunshine. He was growling and purring over the victim now, enjoying the first fruits of the spring after his kind. The bird was not a pretty object when his remains were released. Emily's eyes filled with tears. She was permitted to weep over the death of a sparrow; it was only the tragedies affecting human-kind which in the little Jervois's code were held unworthy of tears.

"Let's have a funeral," said Ian. "And mightn't darling Paulie have just one other tiny bit of him, first?"

CHAPTER V.

HARRINGAY WITHDRAWS.

"Do I seem to you such a terrible ogre?" Harringay asked.

Eyes, dark blue, wondering, admiring, afraid, opened upon his. "An ogre? Oh, no, Mr. Harringay."

She was breathless, her heart was beating—if only she could get away!

He laid a hand upon her arm: "Don't go. You always go. I want to ask you a question. You will answer it?"

"Of course. Yes."

"Truthfully?"

"Of course."

"You look at me—always—with the gaze of a frightened animal whose master holds the whip. Why?"

She shook her head, trying to smile carelessly, looking upon the ground.

"You don't know why?"

Another shake of the head.

"You don't think I could be unkind to you, do you?"

"No. Oh, no!"

"Then why are you afraid?"

Silence.

"If we are alone for a second you rush away. If I look at you, you turn your head. Why?"

No answer. A hanging head and a suddenly awak-

ened interest in the fastening of one of the stiff white cuffs.

"You can't guess."

"No."

"May I guess?"

Eyes reproachful, imploring, swiftly lifted and dropped again.

"You think the curate mightn't approve."

"Oh, Mr. Harringay, please!"—

"It is to be his privilege to ask for and get an account of all your glances, I suppose? To see his own image in your eyes till the crack of doom? To look down deep into that innocent heart of yours and to find his own name writ large upon it—and nothing but that? Isn't that so?"

"I don't know, indeed. How should I know?"

"Betty says you cried once after I had gone away at something I had said. Is that so?"

She fidgetted with shaking fingers at the ivory links in her wristband, tears of embarrassment were in her eyes. He repeated his question and waited.

"I thought you were vexed with me," at length she said. "You seemed to wish to punish me—never singing. Betty said you hated me. It was dreadfully babyish to cry."

"If I had been there—" he began. His voice was the swiftest whisper caressing her cheek, but Violet's slight strength of resistance melted beneath it and the tightened pressure upon her arm. She felt herself losing not only strength but consciousness, sinking toward him.

Then his hand suddenly dropped from her arm, he drew back a couple of paces and the light went out from his face.

A voice had sounded in the hall. Violet's eyes, awake now and full of startled dismay, met Harringay's.

"The curate," Harringay said, and turned to the mirror and rubbed a finger curiously across a crimson streak that had appeared upon his forehead, and was sullenly dying away.

In a few moments he was alone, watching the pair move off toward the tennis-lawn. Violet was not inclined to the game and went with evident reluctance. She had not much *savoir faire*, poor girl. To deceive had not been among the simple lessons life had taught her. A lucky thing that the curate was quite of the sucking pig order of simplicity, Harringay thought with uneasiness, looking after them.

"With that exasperatingly shame-faced manner of hers and that telltale face another man would have known I had been making love to the girl," he said to himself.

He was grateful now to chance for having sent Carlyon upon the scene.

"God knows I don't want," he said, "I should be sick of her in a month—fit to cut my throat. Poor Bill—darling old greenhorn!—will never discover that she's not a brilliant companion. They'll go on boring each other to extinction all the days of their lives and never be a bit the wiser. I don't want to interfere. I think I'm well out of it. I think I've had enough of Blow Weston. I'll go away."

He went and came at his own will. When he said he was leaving on the morrow, none of them guessed that it was a long farewell he meditated. But he had it in his mind all that evening and was moody and silent, in consequence.

When it was nearly over he broke the silence he had held for some time. He had been looking openly and steadily at Violet, who with her head bent low over some work in her hands, had blushed, and paled, and quivered, a betrayal of her consciousness of his gaze.

"Shall I sing you something now?" he asked her abruptly.

She got up and went to the piano and nervously held him up a song or two with Bill's name written across the corner of each.

"Nothing of the curate's—thanks," he said for her ear alone.

He made his own selection. "This old thing will do—I'll sing this," he said. "I'm going to sing to you—to you alone," he announced as he bent forward to place the music. "The others don't exist for either of us, please, for a few moments."

He had chosen a song much in vogue a few years before in musical drawing-rooms—Violet had heard it sung till her ear had wearied of it—an ardent declaration of love which was to cling with might and main, and to last for ever and ever. And it was sung for Violet—that little girl of hitherto absolutely no importance, sitting at the piano in her one evening frock, of pale gray merino, playing the accompaniment to the passionate voice, with fingers that trembled painfully, and with a heart moved to the core!

While she was still bewildered, thrilled, stricken, lost in a maze of overwhelming emotion, Harringay was holding out his hand to her in silent farewell.

When Miss Carlyon had gone to bed that night, Harringay recovered from his fit of moody sentimentality, and his friend "the greenhorn" curate, sat and

smoked the pipe of friendship—of short confidences and long silences, over the study fire.

"You made a mistake in taking holy orders, as I always told you," Harringay said, taking up again the thread of a conversation dropped some time before. "You aren't in any way fitted for it that I see. And mind you, I don't mean that for an ill compliment."

"Who is fitted for it?" Bill asked, but indifferently, as if his mind were not fully occupied by the theme. "Though, very likely, in my case there are special disabilities," he added humbly. "My opinion was not asked: no choice was given me. One of my uncles happens to be a general, the other is a bishop. You can see, plain enough, that my mother had got to make one of her two sons a soldier, and to stick the other into the Church. Tom wouldn't go into the Church—that's all. I shall always be a stick of a preacher (I've a constitutional objection to jawing about anything), and I've no special aptitude or liking for any of the duties; but there 'tis; and I've got to make the best of it. I'd rather be in Tom's shoes, seeing about me, and having a good time, generally; but it's more than certain he never would have stood in mine, so there's no good in thinking about it."

"But there is good. Why should you be buried alive because you are too feeble minded to shout? If you must stick to the Church, go into the manufacturing districts—take a curacy in a London slum."

"Yes," Bill said slowly, "I know. But we can't all be pushing to the front. It's useful in its way, to keep the place we're given, I expect. I should feel a lot prouder of myself if I were fighting vice and fever and ignorance in the way you mention; but the fact of my having gratified a private ambition wouldn't

make for the good of the world. Because, somebody must be curate of Blow Weston and Crabberton, you see, while the livings go together."

Harringay was naturally not convinced, but the other tacitly declined to carry on the discussion. He thought over several reasons which satisfied him that his life need not necessarily be empty and cast away even in Blow Weston, but these were such as he did not care to drag out for disputation. If he felt a thing strongly, "'Come then, let us go and be dumb,'" Bill Carlyon said to his hurt. "We've got to stick where we're put and to do the best we can, I suppose," he said, summarizing the articles of his belief with the least possible waste of breath; and he knocked out his pipe to emphasize the fact that that was for him the end of the matter.

"But—pardon me—that is exactly where you are wrong, Bill," the other persisted. "To stick where we are is generally the very worst and feeblest thing we can do. 'To make the best of it,' is a phrase, simply—what does it mean? put on a grinning face when you're cursing in your heart. Who's the better for that pantomime?" Then he too leaned forward and knocked out the ashes of his pipe on the bars of the grate. "Chuck the whole thing, Bill, and come with me to Paris; and let's wake the echoes for a bit, and live to be thankful before we die," he suggested.

To this extravagant proposition the curate did not even reply. But he was at length roused to a fuller interest: "Are you going back to Paris, then?" he asked and looked the other man straight in the eyes. "Why?"

"I'm sharing Lawson's studio, as I told you. I

only came over to give the mother a look, and have knocked about longer than I intended. I shall be off to-morrow or the next day."

"I have often wondered what has kept you here," Bill admitted, with his direct gaze. "I have sometimes thought there might be a special attraction. Do you mind telling me if that is so?"

Harringay got up from his chair and stamped his feet upon the rug to shake his trousers into position. "The attraction of much kindness and hospitality," he said, as he looked down upon his nether garments. "The attraction of pleasant companionship and pretty, kind faces."

"Nothing more special than that?" the downright curate persisted. "Tell me if it is so, Harringay. I made up my mind to ask you to-night. It isn't idle curiosity. It's—" His florid color faded a little and his eyes left the other man's face. "You know what I mean," he went on in a minute. "I mean Violet Belton. If you have any feeling about her—any intention, I should like to know at once. It would be kindness in you to tell me."

"None, I have none," Harringay said, and having uttered the words ceased to concern himself about the set of his trousers, and stood upright, steady as a rock, his lips locked as though they never would open again, his jaw hard and strong looking.

The curate got up and placed himself on the hearth-rug beside his friend. He was the taller by several inches, and being high shouldered, short-waisted, long in the leg, he appeared to have greatly the advantage in height over Harringay's, well-built, firmly knit frame for strength. But the latter, only a couple of years older than the curate, looked a man and a strong

one, while Carlyon had still something of the appearance of a lanky, overgrown boy.

"You aren't mad with me for asking?" Bill said presently and he put a propitiatory hand upon the other's steady shoulder. "It seems to me such a lot of mischief is done because people are afraid to speak out. There is nothing between her and me—except what is in my own mind—at present. If I knew for certain what I have sometimes fancied that you have for her something of the same feeling that I have, I should know it was all up with me and the thing would be over and no harm done—to her."

Harringay was moved to generosity by the humility of the speech and proceeded to set the poor fellow's fears thoroughly at rest.

"I admire your Violet sincerely," he said. "That she was yours—predestined from the beginning—I never doubted, I wish you every joy, Bill—but my dear fellow, you mustn't be angry that I don't envy you. I was not made for constancy. I wouldn't have your prospect of an unbroken domesticity, even with your Violet by my side, for half the world holds." He shuddered and shook off Bill's hand from his shoulder. "Bah!" he cried, "the contemplation fills me with a miserable dejection. I should blow my brains out in a week. I am half tempted to do it vicariously—to-night—for you, Bill."

Bill straightened himself, expanded his chest and drew a long breath.

"Ah! It's lucky we look at things with such different eyes, isn't it?" he said, "but it's so hard to realize—that's how I came to make the mistake."

"You made it because you're a jealous old fool, Bill."

Bill laughed unsteadily. "I don't believe I am," he said, "I suppose I can't help thinking that everyone who comes near her must be in love with her."

"Shut up and come to bed!" said Harringay.

And to bed they went.

CHAPTER VI.

UNCLE EUSTACE INTERVENES.

When Carlyon opened the door of the schoolroom that afternoon he was greeted with the shout of relief with which the young Jervoises hailed the prospect of any respite from their lessons. But there were two pairs of eyes that looked past him and the door he held in his hand, to the two pairs of lips the same question leapt, and of these one pair was dumb.

"Where's Mr. Harringay?" Betty cried, demanding him fiercely of the curate, who had had the temerity to appear without the companion from whom he borrowed all the interest he could now command.

"Harringay's gone."

Alas for Billy Carlyon! The light that died out of a couple of faces!

"Then why did you let him go?" Betty cried, and scowled at Carlyon with eyes dagger-pointed, and flung the book she held, face downward, on the table. "When's he coming back?"

"Never, very likely. Harringay's an erratic chap. He's off to-day to Paris. Aren't lessons over, Miss Belton?"

"If you like, I suppose," Miss Belton said—"if the children like."

The two younger children, waiting for nothing more definite, flung out of the room in search of hats and Paul the kitten; only Betty kept her chair, lying back in it, her chin on her breast, the picture of scowling dejection.

"I don't care for a holiday," she said, addressing no one in particular, with severity, "where's the good of a holiday now?"

"Why are you looking like such a little fiend?" Bill asked her with irritation. "What's up with you now?"

"I wished for Mr. Harringay. There's no good in holidays without him."

Violet looked at the child fearlessly giving utterance to the thought of her own heart. What was the good of anything without him for ever—ever more? In a minute what a darkness had fallen upon the sweet May day! How senseless all life was! How dreary! Lessons or no lessons—what did it matter now?

"Don't be an ass, Betty," Bill said. He did not understand the full seriousness of the situation, but he, too, was laboring under a sudden sense of disappointment and discomfort. The child sank lower and lower in her chair, sliding dejectedly over the wooden seat. He tilted it suddenly as he spoke, and Betty disappeared under the table.

She was by no means above rough play of that or any other description, but she flew up now and attacked the curate with the fierceness of a little wild cat, hitting out at him blindly with feminine disregard of consequence.

"Young woman! It's time you were brought to your senses," the curate said. Then he caught her wrists, and looking in her face saw that her eyes were full of tears. In her rage and shame that he should discover in her that weakness, she ducked her head swiftly, and bit the hand that held her.

"Oh, Betty!" Violet cried, awaking from her apathy. "For shame! You are hurting him. You have made Mr. Carlyon's hand bleed."

He held the child for a minute before him and looked into her face, shamed and passionate, and forced her to look into his; then stooped and kissed her, and let her go.

Choking with the sobs to which she would not give way, Betty escaped. In the hall was Ian, a strange little fat figure in the scarlet pinafore, with a soft-peaked cloth cap, much too large for her, pulled well down over eyes and ears.

"Oh, Betty, I'm so glad he's gone!" she cried. "Emily's taken the riding whip he left behind, and I've got his cap—look! for my very own; and—"

Betty fetched the little sister a box on the ears, and tore the cap, some of Ian's red-brown curls adhering, from the astonished head: "You dare to touch his things!" she cried, but further speech was beyond her. She stamped her foot furiously at the frightened child and, sobbing loudly now, rushed away from mortal ken.

An half hour later the curate, walking slowly, and with hanging head on his homeward way, saw, beneath the thorn hedge which bordered his small domain, a scarlet bundle lying. The bundle, erecting itself at his approach, proved to be no other than Betty Jervois with broken hat, disheveled hair to which twigs and little bits of moss were clinging, and white face where stains of the bank upon which she had been lying mingled with the stain of tears.

She uttered no word, but sprang upon him, dragged from the trousers-pocket in which it was hidden the

hand she had maltreated and, pressing her lips upon it, kissed it again and again. Then, with a swift and passionate movement eluding the grasp he would have laid on her, she turned and fled across the meadow home.

Alas poor Betty! In all her battles always the worst wounded, even in those early days!

The curate did not even turn his head to look after her. He was staggering under a worse blow than any Betty had dealt him. The wound in his heart was so sore that he knew of no other, and did not remember until long after why Betty had kissed his hand.

He had put the momentous question to Violet Belton and she had said him nay.

He kept away from the rectory for two days, and then the rector, who was accustomed to the young man's presence about the place, came across for him and Carlyon told him of what had befallen him.

Mr. Jervois was overwhelmed. Hardly surprised, however, as he honestly believed in a conspiring of circumstance to bring about his own personal discomfort. And here would be an unspeakable nuisance —to have his curate banished from his house—here would be a scandal in the parish and an annoyance all round. Here was a matter too, calling for the stirring up of himself, a man only asking peace and leisure, to the taking of disagreeable action. Besides it had been a suitable match for his sister's child to make, and one that would cement interests all round.

"Refused you?" he said, staring at the young man with the plaintively worried look his face assumed when things went wrong. "How extremely

inconsiderate of Violet! But she couldn't mean it—she didn't understand. I am quite sure she didn't understand what you meant, Bill."

"She quite understood," Bill said dismally. "I—think I put it to her more than once."

He was silent, feeling over again the shock of the stunning blow when it had first fallen. Speech was very difficult, he didn't wish to have to talk.

"But I shall have to speak to her. I shall have to ask what she means. She must be made to see what she is doing. It must be put before her."

Carlyon stretched out a deprecating hand: "Please!" he said, "I would rather she was worried no more. It is my misfortune, but of course, she must please herself."

"Of course, of course. Yet if she altered her mind, as she might do—women do it, Bill—that would be acceptable to you, eh? You haven't altered yours?"

Bill smiled sickly, "I am not likely to alter," he said.

The same afternoon a messenger was sent across to Queen Anne's Cottage: "Would Mr. Carlyon go at once?"

The children greeted him, hanging about in the hall.

"You're to go into the library," Emily told him with giggling glee, "father's scolding Violet, and Violet's crying."

Ian jumped with much enjoyment of the cheerful situation, then, standing the long suffering black kitten on his hind legs, addressed to that unconscious animal remarks which caused the curate to guess that

the library-door must have stood ajar during the interview between the uncle and niece.

"You have other people to think of, my dear Paul," Ian said grasping two little paws in one hand and lifting an admonishing finger above the kitten's black nose. "A girl hasn't got nothing but her own feelings to think of! And what have you got against the young man, Paul? Stand up straight on your darling little hind legs and tell me."

Here Betty, with her famous imitation of her father's manner, took up the parable:

"Surely you owe me some consideration, my dear girl. Haven't I had trouble enough? Don't you think you owe it to me to try to make matters a little pleasant? Ian!" with a swift reassumption of her own personality. "What are you pinching Paulie's tail for?"

"Violet cried just there, I wanted to make Paul mew a tiny bit," explained Ian.

Signs of the tears were still present on Violet's cheek of delicate fairness, as Carlyon took her hand. He pressed it firmly and his heart swelled with anger and pity. She had been bullied on his account! He would not bear it for an instant. He would give up all hope of happiness eternally rather than she should suffer through him. Mr. Jervois was startled at the savage look in the ordinarily kind blue eyes that the young man turned on him.

"My dear Bill—you must excuse my sending for you," the rector said, "It is as I expected. You were a little hasty in the deduction you drew. Violet had no intention of speaking finally. She would like to reconsider her answer if you will allow her."

"I didn't give you authority to bother her into saying that," Bill said, with anger, "I made no mistake, nor did she. She meant to refuse me, and she did it; and I suppose I'm man enough to abide by what she wishes. I hope," he said very tenderly, and turning to the girl, "——I hope you do not believe that I wished to complain?"

He had lost all his boyishness in that moment. Violet, contemplating him through her wet lashes, saw in him a strong power, willing and able to protect the weak and oppressed. How could she have had the boldness to refuse him? Her uncle had asked her that question—she asked it of herself now.

She had given a promise to her uncle, and presently she spoke in fulfilment of it; "I am quite sure you would not complain," she said falteringly. "But I should like, if you will allow me, to have time to think over the—what you asked me—before I finally reply."

Bill's red face grew redder with surprise and emotion; disregarding the rector's presence, he took her hands in his. "Are you sure of that? Quite sure?" he asked, earnest and eager. "It is your own wish—not put into your head—you haven't been forced into saying this to me?"

"Really, Bill!" the rector ejaculated, looking reproachfully upon his curate with his prominent slate-colored eyes. "Do you suppose that the girl has been coerced by me? That I have beaten her, or threatened her? But this is the thanks one gets for doing one's best and meaning well all round. It is a little hard, I think—a little hard!"

He shuffled together some loose papers lying on the

writing-table and took them in his hand, preparatory to beating the retreat of dignified injury. He always had loose sheets of paper near at hand; he never attended to them, Bill did that, but he had a habit of collecting them loosely, and moving them from one place to another. It made him think that he was busy.

"Please don't go, Uncle Eustace," Violet said, less timidly than usual. The firm grasp of Bill's hand had strength in it. "If you don't mind I should like to go to my mother for a time. If you can spare me —and if Mr. Carlyon will wait. I will come back again—perhaps in a few weeks—but I should like to be with my mother first. I can make up my mind better with her."

The rector subsided into a chair. He gave a sigh and looked tragically round the room as though to call on all his household gods to witness that here was the very climax of all the disagreeables of his life.

"Of course, you know it is just now impossible—quite impossible," he began in his tone of half-restrained irritability; but Carlyon quickly came to Violet's assistance.

"Of course she must go," he said, "of course. The children? Oh, I will take care of the children—Caroline will take care of them. You shall go at once. And remember," he went on, still maintaining that firm clasp of her hand which had helped her through the trying scene, "remember you are to think of yourself before me—before anybody. You are to think of your own happiness and to be afraid of nothing."

"I will remember," she promised him. She smiled tremulously upon him, feeling suddenly quite brave and happy. She had never seen him before like this,

all his fear of her, his shyness, his boyishness gone. Surely, after a little time, when she and her mother had talked things over, it would be all right, it would not seem so impossible.

"You would like to go to-morrow?" he asked her, and she assented, while the rector groaned aloud, grinding himself lower and lower in his chair, much after Betty's fashion when things went amiss.

"Then, good-bye," the curate said, gripping the hands in his and looking steadily into Violet's face. "If you can write me a line—do. If not, do not trouble. I can wait."

CHAPTER VII.

GIRLS WANT A MOTHER.

It was all very well for William Carlyon to have taken matters so largely into his hands and to have sent away the rector's niece from her post as caretaker of the rector's children, but Mr. Jervois knew that the responsibilities and the annoyances arising therefrom, would fall very heavily upon himself.

The day that Violet left Blow Weston happened to be wet, so wet that it was decided in the kitchen the young ladies could not possibly go out of doors to play. The young ladies themselves were of a different opinion. "*Laissez moi jouer dans cette belle boue*," Ian would have cried with the little Napoleon if the French language had not been a sealed book to her. Even Emily, a bronchitic little subject, who caught cold on the smallest provocation, thought to paddle in puddles a charming pastime, and exulted in hearing the water squashing out of her boots as she walked.

Once, in an unusually complacent mood, but in an evil moment as the sequel shows, Harringay had roughly modelled for the eldest girl a head of Chip, the terrier, in clay, since which occasion Betty had been seized with an enthusiasm for the plastic art. In spite of frantic remonstrance from Susan, the maid, she now started off, followed by her two faithful adherents, to secure a supply of the raw material, which she judged the rain would have reduced to fit condition for handling.

On the return of the mud-laden trio, the unhappy father, compelled to the exertion by an outraged Susan, was reluctantly induced to inspect their condition. He was shocked at the spectacle revealed to him; and having pitied himself, and called reproaches upon his daughter, he gave the order that they should at once be put to bed.

It was his punishment for all offences, little and big, and in the present instance was a salutary measure to adopt; if only the delinquents, their sodden clothes, having been removed by a relentless maid, and themselves tucked warm and safe between the sheets, had stayed there.

This they did only till the coast was clear. Then Betty arose, and scudding, barefooted, to the schoolroom, where it was deposited, re-possessed herself of a supply of clay. The children spent an hour happily in the moulding of various objects, Betty setting about the task with a natural cleverness after which the unsuccessful Emily labored in vain. Ian, less ambitious, contented herself with the fashioning of shapeless articles, bearing no resemblance to anything inanimate or inanimate nature, but affording their creator satisfaction as a means for getting as much dirt on to her small person as the limited area would allow.

They proposed to themselves to harden their artistic products by exposing them to a toasting on the bars of the grate. But the fire refused to do more than smoulder, and the process was too slow for Ian's quick spirit. Before the others knew what she was about, she had sprung on a chair, reached down the paraffin lamp which stood on a bracket out of the children's reach, and flung its contents in the fire. She had seen

Susan do likewise one morning when the kindling was damp and would not burn.

Then a scream ran through the house, startling poor Mr. Jervois in the library, turning his blood to ice in his veins. He knew instantly that he would not recover from the shock for days, but his parent's instinct helped him into action. He had reached the schoolroom before the servants, falling back upon each other with gaspings for breath, and hands upon their hearts, had started on the way.

The screams continued for minutes to ring through the house; but after all, not much harm was done. The iron guard had saved the children from destruction. Only the skirt of Ian's little shirt had ignited, and when her father reached the room that garment was still flaming upon the boards, while Ian, standing mother-naked, watched the consumption of her only garment with heart-shuddering yells. Each little leg was scorched, and Betty's hands which had torn off the flaming garment were badly burnt.

The children were put to bed in serious earnest then, Emily, quite unhurt, cowering between the sheets for sympathy. The doctor was sent for. The rector standing sentinel in his little girl's room because there was no one about him in whom any confidence could be placed, and because he did not consider it safe to leave his children for an instant, felt a sort of complacency in the contemplation of his accumulated troubles. Surely there was not in the county another man so sorely tired!

The curate and Caroline his sister, hurrying across found the poor man standing by Ian's pillow, looking down helpless with gaping mouth and protruding eyes upon the fevered, frightened, excited face.

"My legs are burnt off," she screamed to Caroline, with looks of terror and anguish. "They're burnt off. Make haste, make haste, make haste to help me, they're burnt off, I say!"

How happy the rector was to relinquish his post and to escape downstairs.

"I shan't ever be able to make those drawings for *Punch* now," Betty said, later, when the doctor had been, and had dressed her painfully wounded hands, and reassured Ian as to her probable retention of her fat legs.

Later still when the curate came upstairs to say good-night her mind seemed to be running on the same theme:

"I should think if Mr. Harringay knew, he'd be sorry," she said. "Because he thought my drawings clever and I never shall be able to do them for *Punch* now."

The rector was profuse in his thanks to Miss Carlyon for her timely aid.

"You see how helpless I am," he said. "At the mercy of servants—worthless servants—and my motherless little girls exposed to hourly dangers. Other men have the misfortune to lose their wives, I know, and life seems to go on with them much as usual. Surely no other has ever had such worries and anxieties as mine to bear! You won't leave me, Miss Carlyon? Not for to-night, at least?"

"Certainly not, if you wish it. Bill and I will both stay," Caroline assented cheerfully. The unruffled propriety of her bearing was so agreeable after an experience of the hysterical helplessness of the servants. But the rector did not understand why the brother

also should be compelled to take up residence, and he said as much presently to the young man.

"Oh, I'll stop," Bill said, indifferently. "It's all right. I've got my orders to stay."

Mr. Jervois did not wish to seem inhospitable, but he wondered why.

The guest-chamber had been prepared for Miss Carlyon, but the servants did not receive at all cheerfully the order to get ready another spare room which had not been slept in for months. And the rector who heartily disliked his servants, was entirely afraid of them.

"There seems to be an idea that the north room is damp," he said to Miss Carlyon when next she appeared. "I really think Bill would find it pleasanter to sleep at home to-night and I'm sure we should be all right without him." Whereupon Miss Carlyon had at once made it clear beyond the possibility of mistake that Bill was not to desert her.

"Extraordinary freak! I wonder why," said Mr. Jervois to himself again.

And then, he never remembered how, or by what process Caroline's reason for insisting on the curate's presence and chaperonage was at once made clear to him. The enlightenment brought the poor man nothing but a load of painful embarrassment. He sank lower and lower in his chair, his jaw dropped on his chest, his always prominent eyes almost fell from his head in dismay. With a nervous hand he raked at the faint side-whiskers which adorned his cheeks, and made repeated, always futile efforts to get their ends into his mouth.

If that was the idea she had in her head it was extremely uncomfortable, and supremely ridiculous. At

their ages, and with his history! A boy like Bill, too! Bill was probably enjoying the joke; and the servants were sure to see through the situation, and to be coarsely facetious among themselves. The Carlyons had been a comfort to him; he had told Caroline of his troubles and had been at ease with her. Never, never should he know an easy moment in her society again—Never?

He slipped farther in his chair, his long legs sprawled out across the hearthrug. He would have liked to have hidden under it if so he might have escaped from his embarrassing thoughts.

This was the last and most serious disagreeable to which the death of his wife had exposed him—that there was in people's minds an expectation that he would marry again. He recalled the governesses, and how they had rendered him ridiculous by their unwelcome attentions. Caroline had censured the governesses, he remembered. They had wanted to marry him: was it possible that Caroline was under the impression he desired to marry her.

The idea so terrified him, filled his being with such revolt that he wondered how he should bring himself to support the presence of the woman in his house.

During the first days of the Carlyons' stay, the rector was painfully conscious of the subject he now imagined to be in all minds: his nervousness and discomfort in Caroline's presence were patent to all, and he was driven to quite desperate measures, to escape from her society.

In those days he rose fifty per cent. in the good graces of his parishioners in whose houses he took refuge, visiting from door to door, sitting down to

talk, embarrassed and ill at ease, it is true, with people he had not called on since his wife's death.

"The rector is beginning to wake up again," the people said. "And time he did! A wife's a wife, but she ain't everything—even when she's dead!"

One old, bed-ridden woman to whom the poor wife had been very kind, had forgotten apparently that such a person had existed. She inquired aggrievedly for the curate when the rector appeared. "Wheer's the young chap?" she asked. "Tell th' young chap I want some more of his sister's soup. She's a beetiful soup-maker the woman is, and that I don't mind sayin' for her."

Mrs. Butcher, a wife of one of the farmers, a kind-hearted woman of whom Betty approved, asked him anxiously about his little girls.

"I have left Miss Carlyon with them," the rector said, looking away self-consciously from the friendly face as he replied.

"I am so relieved to hear it. I was saying to my husband last night 'dear Mrs. Jervois would feel happy about her poor children if she knew they were in Miss Carlyon's care.'"

There were tears in her eyes as she looked at the uneasy rector but there was also meaning in her glance. He felt that he hated the woman for that expression as he hurried away.

Sitting by the roadside in his old patched jacket, his crutches beside him, his shrivelled, twisted leg laid alongside its able fellow in the long grass, was Ambrose Nudd the cripple. He leered at the clergyman, contorting his hideous face into a knowing smile as Mr. Jervois placed the expected shilling in his willing thorny palm.

"I han't seen too many o' your shillin's of late," he said, conscientiously abstaining from any show of gratitude "but if, as I heared tell, a new missus is a-coming to th' rect'ry there's, mayhap, better times in store for all of us."

There was no refuge. The thing was in the air. The poor rector took himself homeward, as a poor rabbit turning desperately from the yelping dogs to the hole where the ferret works. Comfort was in Bill's unconsciousness, in his easy mention of his sister's name, in the serene gaze of Caroline herself. He thought he could not go beyond his garden gate again while the children were in Miss Carlyon's care.

Presently he perceived that if he could have forgotten the horrible idea which had been in Caroline's mind, things were more than endurable under the rectory roof—they were distinctly pleasant. Bill was always welcome there. He was one of those visitors of whom their entertainers say in praise, "You never know whether they are there or not." He accommodated himself easily, had his own amusements, his own occupation. The rector liked to have his presence in the room with him, even though for an hour at a time, perhaps, no word was spoken between the two men. And in the presence of a lady there was enjoyment—there was no gainsaying.

Poor Violet was, after all, such a child! "Like a little wax madonna she was holy in the place;" but the servants took no orders from her, the children were intractable under her régime. With Caroline everything moved like clockwork. The meals were regular and better cooked. There was no clashing of unanswered bells, because the parlor-maid had just slipped out to her sweetheart in the stables; no burst

of untimely vulgar laughter grated on the rector's shrinking ear each time the kitchen-door stood ajar.

The evenings were passed in the schoolroom because a piano was there, and both men liked the soothing influence of music in the idle hour, after dinner. And Miss Carlyon and the rector had long discovered a mutual passion for chess. Both were extremely indifferent players, and Bill, who was a good one, declined to play with either, but as they could not criticise each other's blunders, they were happy in their ignorance and scorned the expert.

With the children, subdued and wounded, Caroline showed herself such a patient and attentive nurse that even Betty who hated the curate's sister, and wished to hate her, was silenced. There were days when, helpless with her bandaged hands, Betty had said in the morning that evening never could come—days which had been made bearable, even enjoyable, by Caroline's untiring fidelity. She read them *David Copperfield* at this time; and if there is in the world a book to make boys and girls forget their weariness and restlessness and irritable pain, it is surely *David Copperfield*—heard for the twentieth time. But for the first—!

Years afterwards when an ocean of wrath, bitterness and uncharitableness rolled between the two women, whose characters, besides, had placed them as the poles asunder, Betty, unsparing and vituperative, would pause in the midst of her recrimination and remind herself, "She read me *David Copperfield* when I was ill."

By the time that Caroline announced there was no longer any need for her presence at the rectory, Ian the impulsive, given over to likes and dislikes of the

moment, wept on the lady's neck, and besought her with a warm, wet cheek pressed convulsively upon Miss Carlyon's own, never to leave them, ever, ever again.

"You are just as dear as my mamma. I shall call you my mamma," Ian said.

At which speech Emily opened mildly disapproving eyes: "If Betty had heard that, she would have beaten you," she told her small sister afterwards.

"Then, don't tell her," said the practical Ian. "I do wish she was my mamma all the same. She's got such a dear little gold whistle on her watch chain. I don't care if her nose is long. She knows how to make beautiful carts out of cardboard for my little fur ponies."

But Ian was well and able to play now, it was upon her father that the strange desolation occasioned by the loss of the Carlyons fell. Bill, to get over that weary time, he must wait for Violet's answer, decided that he would take his holiday now, and swept away Caroline with him to their old home in Hampshire, so that there was no alleviation of the loneliness into which the poor rector found himself suddenly plunged.

He did not remember to have been so glad of anything for years as when that long three weeks of the curate's leave came to an end. He invited the young man and his sister to return to lunch with him after service on the first Sunday of their reappearance, but Caroline said she was tired of her journey and declined.

On the Monday afternoon when Mr. Jervois called at Queen Anne's, he found Carlyon out on his parish rounds, and Caroline alone. He had far rather, even at that juncture, have found Caroline out and Carlyon

alone, but it was a relief to talk to one of them. Indeed he had had of late occasion to pity himself to such a degree that he felt if he had no one to confide in speedily, his keen and unshared appreciation of his own troubles would end in disaster to himself. There was no real good in complaint, of course, and trouble had to be borne, but when one's nature craved for sympathy, and when one was absolutely bursting with trouble— !

"The cook forgot the caper sauce with the boiled mutton, to-day," he began as soon as greetings were over, and he had sunk in a chair, his plaintive face was turned to Caroline, blank-eyed, he raked at the pale side whiskers with his restless fingers.

"I mentioned before Rhoda—the parlor-maid, you know—something of my annoyance; she was inconsiderate enough to repeat my few words in the kitchen, and cook came into the room before lunch was over to say she would leave me at once if I was not entirely satisfied. What did she suppose would become of us—four hungry, helpless people in the house—and no cook?

"Susan has got another young man—that dangerous rascal, Tom Shore. Ian is my informant. My children are posted in all the vulgar love affairs of the kitchen, Miss Carlyon. Can my poor little girls grow up to be delicate-minded ladies with such associations? I heard Betty using a word to-day, quite innocently, I am sure, which I could not repeat to you.

"They had Tom Shore to spend the evening in the kitchen last night and Ian went down in her night-dress and sat on his lap.

"Betty took the children to the sand-pit this morning; they have had no dinner. They wanted red sand

for their bird-cages. Gardener lent them the boy to wheel the barrow. I met them just now, coming back. The boy was riding on the sand, his legs dangling, Betty was crowding the barrow."

"Betty is old enough to know better," said Miss Carlyon with severity.

"Betty has no mother," the rector said.

He had prepared the speech which was to follow, but unexpected feeling broke him down. He had so loved the mother of his children! The phrase which expressed her loss seemed ever as if it must choke him. But at such an inconvenient time! He cleared his throat and went on huskily, with dropped eyes and a miserable face.

"Girls want a mother, Miss Carlyon. Will you take pity on me, and be a mother to my children?" he said.

CHAPTER VIII.

BETTY'S DARK HOUR.

Susan, when she dressed her young ladies in the morning, informed them that it was not for very long she should perform that office. She would not stop to be lorded over by no Miss Carlyon, even if that lady was to be, ten times over, Miss Betty's new mamma.

She was on her knees before Miss Betty as she made that statement, in a convenient position for the box of the ears which her young mistress promptly administered with telling effect.

During the free fight which ensued between the lady and the maid, Ian slipped half-dressed from the room and ran downstairs. She burst in upon her father, opening his letters at the breakfast table: "Father! father! Is it true?" she cried. "Oh, I do hope it's true, and Miss Carlyon is going to be my mamma, because then old beast Susan is going. Is it true? Say it's true."

The rector, with an air of utter despondency, drew his youngest daughter upon his knee. "Yes, my dear child. Yes," he said, "I thought it was best for all of us. We seem to get into such muddles. I think she will be kind to us, Ian—don't you think she will be kind?"

He had made the sacrifice for his children's sake. He was already horribly doubtful of the wisdom of

the act. He longed for the backing-up of even such a baby as Ian.

Ian was radiant. She swung her black stockinged legs ecstatically backward and forward, and gave little jumps of delight as she sat on her father's knee.

"Shall Betty and Emily and me be dressed in pink and blue like those little girls when Nora Butcher was married?" she inquired with prospective rapture, "Shall we have lockets hanging round——?"

But at this point Betty appeared at the door, her face pale on one cheek, and on the other, quite plainly to be seen, the red marks of her gentle nurse's fingers, her unruly hair, disheveled in the late struggle, standing out wildly from her head.

"It is true!" Ian cried to her. "Father is going to marry her. It is true, Betty."

For a moment the walls reeled round the child, the earth heaved, that last blow on the side of her head had been a stunning one. If she had understood her feeling then, Betty would probably have fainted; but being the unsophisticated little savage she was, she struggled against the sickening sensation of the instability of the material world, and wavering a little in her course, stumbled across the room to her father. Her eyes were misty with pain, but in them was helpless anger, terror, jealousy, almost despair.

"You shall not," she said, clutching her father, "I won't have her brought here to live. You wicked, wicked old man—how dare you! you shall not!"

"Go out of the room," said the miserable rector. "Go at once before I have to send you to bed."

When she only sobbed out her wild incoherent rage he took her by the shoulders to turn her from the room, but she flung herself to the ground and clung

about his feet: "Don't father—don't bring her here, I will be good, father. I will take care of Ian and Emily. I will do that you wish—always, always, if you won't bring her here instead of my mamma!"

He had in the end to carry her from the room. It was no easy matter, she struggled and shrieked, and kicked in his arms, catching at this object and that, seeming to think if once expelled her cause was lost. She was deposited at length on the mat before the door, and the rector locked himself into the room with a trembling hand. He had done it for the best, God knows! To obtain a decently regulated household, to secure a fit protection for his children. He had flattered himself that his troubles and disagreeables, arising from the refractoriness of his eldest daughter were nearly at an end. Good heavens! were they only just about to begin?

At the hour of early dinner Betty was not to be found. She had said her head ached, Emily explained, and she and Ian had played alone.

"Betty must be found," her father said, drumming with thin, nervous fingers on the table and vaguely addressing no one in particular; but it was a relief to him to be quit for a time of that turbulent presence. He was rendered miserable for the whole day by his recollection of the morning's scene, and when, late in the afternoon, he put on his hat to go out, he remembered to ask of the servant opening the door if the child had turned up.

As far as Rhoda knew she had not.

"Was she in the house?"

Rhoda was not in a position to say.

The rector fidgetted for a moment on the door-mat, then turned and opened the drawing-room door.

The drawing-room offered positively no field for mischief or amusement to the youthful mind; it was the most unlikely place in the world for Betty to hide in. It must have been his unerring instinct to do the useless thing which led the poor rector in that direction. He looked blankly about the place into which he had hardly set foot since his wife's death.

It had been a pleasant, sunshiny room, not too bright nor fine for the daily use of a household. Now the blinds were drawn, and there was a smell of dust and airlessness, and an order that was strange to his memory of his wife's favorite room. A deep wicker chair which had been her usual seat, was the only piece of furniture which was not ranged with uncomfortable precision against the walls. This was pulled in front of the empty grate.

He looked at the back of the easy-chair for a minute, and took his hat from his head. He could almost believe the figure of his wife might be lying there still, he looked for the knot of bright brown hair appearing over the top. Slowly, his heart full of tender misery, he came into the room, and laid a hand upon the unconscious child's back.

And there, after all, was Betty.

Betty the truant, the tyrant, the termagant! She was crouched upon the rug before the cheerless grate and her head lay on the cushioned seat of the chair as it had been used to lie on her mother's knee. With some dim idea of finding there a reminiscence of the old comfort and protection she had brought the chair into its familiar position and had flung herself before it.

Once, when one of the temporarily insurmountable griefs of her life had overtaken her, when the sandy

cat with which she had played from her cradle, had died, or her tame jackdaw had been killed, she remembered to have sobbed and wept till all the trouble left her, against the form that lay in the chair. She had sobbed in that position now, till the old grief and the new became curiously blended, and she hardly knew if she cried for the dead pet or the advent of the new mother. She remembered how the large, firm mother's hand had lain on her head, and softly smoothed and smoothed the tangled hair, and so remembering, had wept herself to sleep.

Those dull, prominent eyes of the rector were washed in a rush of sudden tears. He stooped lower, lower still, and with a very timid, awkward hand, stroked, and ever more softly stroked, the tangle of rough hair.

A flicker of light stirred upon the sleeping, tear-stained face, the mouth just moved with a half perceptible smile. The father rather felt and saw than heard the name that trembled on the child's lips. But if she had called it aloud in anguish it could not more certainly have aroused the folded memories of the poor man's brain, or more cruelly awakened the half-hid thoughts and longings of his heart.

He straightened himself abruptly and went hurriedly from the room lest the sob that tore at his throat should burst from him and awake the dreaming child.

He had been bound for Queen Anne's. He went back to his own room instead, and bolted himself in there and pulled down the blinds. There was a certain locked drawer in his writing-table which since his wife's death he had lacked the courage to open. He opened it now and with eager shaking hands, took

out its hidden treasures. Little mementoes of her presence, which had escaped the hands carefully laying away for the daughters' future was the dead mother's belongings. Odds and ends he had found in wandering bewilderedly through rooms so strangely empty of her presence, and had pushed hurriedly and helter skelter into the drawer to save his eyes the pain of falling on them.

"The day will come when I shall be strong enough to look at them," he had said. But he had not yet been strong enough to dare to disturb the covering which the necessities and conventionalities of daily existence had thrown over his unabated grief. He tore it aside ruthlessly now.

A few flowers which had withered in a vase where he had seen her fingers place them, a blotting pad which had lain on her writing-table, a half written letter in its leaves; an unfinished sock of Ian's, the wool tangled about the needles—he had found it pushed into the drawer where his papers were kept, and remembered having swept it there, impatient of its littering his table, on the last morning she had sat with him in the library—a book she had read aloud to him with a down-turned leaf—a dozen pathetic, senseless trifles, talking loudly to his heart with poor dumb mouths of her.

He had not been a clever man, nor a strong nor helpful, nor useful one at the best of times, and what of capability he had possessed—that best part of him to which his clinging love for her and her protective love for him had given birth—had died with her and been buried in her coffin. Yet this much he had of greatness in him that he had known how to love and worship one woman truly, and this much of

nobility remained that, whatever sacrifices paternal affection and nearer ties demanded of him, to that one woman in his heart he would be faithful while he lived.

When, hours later, he replaced all that dear rubbish in its drawer it was too late for Queen Anne's, and Caroline who awaited him there. There had been relief in the tears, there was relief, too, in this.

Betty did not come in with the other children to bid him good-night, but when he sent for her she appeared leaden-faced and sullen, dragging her feet reluctantly across the floor to him as he held out his hand.

"Betty," he said very kindly, but with a manner more firm and dignified than that to which the child was accustomed: "You are older than the others—and I have a thing to say to you which I wish you always to remember. I am going to marry a lady—a kind and clever lady, who will take care of us, and show us the right thing to do. I hope we shall be all happy together, and that things may be more pleasant. But I shall not forget your mother. Never for an instant. That is what I wished to say to you, Betty. Don't forget it. Now, kiss me, my child, and go to bed."

CHAPTER IX.

"MINE OWN FAMILIAR FRIEND."

Mr. Jervois had prayed of Caroline that his probation might be short, and it was arranged that in six weeks the mistress of Queen Anne's Cottage should allow herself to be installed mistress of the rectory.

When about half that time was passed the curate suddenly succumbed to the temptation, which, since Violet's departure, had incessantly beset him, and, in spite of his promise that she should be unmolested, drove in to Edmundsbury to seek her.

A faint hope had been held out to him that she might write. In the ardor of his condition and the matured hopefulness of his mind he had looked for the possible letter by the first post she must have hurried to catch on reaching her home. He passed the interval between that first disappointment and the present unexpected break-down in convincing himself that her not writing to him was a favorable sign. He persuaded himself that there really was no doubt about the result. At that second interview surely she had as good as promised herself to him. The fact that everyone took her ultimate acceptance of him as a matter of course was very reassuring. His sister, the rector, usually spoke to him of the time when Violet should be with him. The children were more intimate than discreet in their conversation on the subject; Ian even going so far as to implore him never

to have any children of his own, she and Betty and Emily being quite sufficient for him. While, as for Violet—Violet should have one of Paul's kittens when he had them, an event to which Ian was always looking forward on the tiptoe of expectation.

In the face of all this it was difficult to remember the uncertainty of the event, and to rebuke an ecstatic, anticipatory joy.

"Violet will not make you a clever housewife, I fear," Caroline often said to him, being of that excellent order of woman who does not shrink from the prophesying of unpleasant things.

What did Billy Carlyon care? If Violet, who lived in his heart, would live also under his roof, what did puddings and cakes and the putting on of buttons signify? He was a sentimental being and he looked at the marriage state not apprehensively at all with his young eyes, seeing only the pretty wife who was to laugh and jest and play with him as well as love him. The sun was always to shine on these two—always gay and happy, laughing and chatting as they went about their parish work, helping each other to put the sadness of what they saw out of sight in their own homes. The hearth was always to be warm there, the firelight that flickered on their faces was to find them always as smooth and serene.

There were alterations in the arrangement of his house which would be desirable in the event of his marriage—he longed for Caroline to be gone that he might set about these. In the meantime he contented himself as well as he could in sinking a tennis court in the meadow beyond the kitchen garden.

At this labor of love he worked daily with an enthusiasm beautiful to see. His unremarkable eyes of

boyish blue were suffused with happiness as he lifted them to contemplate the progress of his work. The little Jervoises had never known even "Billy" so sweet in temper, so hilarious, such good fun.

They came across to help him at the tennis court one morning, Ian and Emily more of a hindrance than otherwise, perhaps, but Betty working like a little navvy at his side, driving in her spade with her foot upon the blade, flinging out shovelful for shovelful with him, who to humor her may have slackened his speed a little. Peter, through an ever-to-be-glorified outbreak of measles in the school, was home again in those days, but he had found more entertainment in lying along the fresh-turned soil on his stomach to study the contents of an overturned ant heap than in taking a share in the useful labors around him. Betty straightened herself, shook back her hanging hair that the morning sunlight might shine into her eyes, and looked across at a group of elm-trees in the near distance round which the rooks were whistling and calling.

"We ought to have made it nearer to a tree, Bill," she said.

"There won't be anywhere for Mr. Harringay to sit while you and Violet play, Bill," Emily remarked. Emily, the least clever of the children, had as make-weight, the insight of sympathy. Her speech was curiously often the statement of Betty's unexpressed thought.

"Poor old Harringay always played tennis lying in a chair with Betty at his feet," the curate remembered, recalling the past with a laugh. "Lazy beggar!" said Peter, gently stirring the ruins of the ant heap with his fingers.

"Lazy beggar yourself!" said Betty, with a kick at the ant-hill.

The boy caught the vicious little foot: "You wait till you get to school, my lady! you'll see what will happen if you kick and talk about 'beggars' there."

"Let go her foot," said the curate, and Peter obeyed, getting a kick here and there in not very vulnerable parts of his body as reward. He did not object in the least. It was his ant-hill he wanted to protect.

"Come back to your work, and don't be a fool, Betty," the curate recommended, and the young lady returned to her shoveling of the earth.

"Mr. Harringay never gave Betty the oil paints he promised," Ian observed. "He promised and promised!"

"He'll bring 'em for her from Paris one of these fine days," the curate said.

"He isn't in Paris, though," said Peter. "I forgot to tell you. Betty! Halloo! Come here. Look at these two fellows, do you see? They've caught this lady with wings—look, they're dragging her—"

"Not in Paris?" said the curate. He raised himself and looked at the boy sprawling on the ground with a curiously stunned expression.

"She was trying to escape—they often do—and these sturdy little rascals have brought her back."

Carlyon went across and prodded the boy in the back with his spade: "Harringay is in Paris," he said.

"Then, I tell you he isn't," Peter declared impatiently—"drop that now, Mr. Carlyon, that spade hurts. Father and I met him yesterday when we drove into Edmundsbury. He said he'd changed his

mind and he wasn't going for another few weeks. Father asked him to ride over, and he said he wouldn't."

"That don't seem very kind to Betty," said Emily, "he might have sent the oil paints by post."

"As if I want his old oil paints!" said Betty, very fierce, being indeed wounded to the quick.

"That's enough work for to-day. Cut home to dinner," the curate said and threw down his spade. He did not explain to himself why the fashioning of the tennis ground had in a moment become a thing of no consequence, a senseless thing. He did not tell himself why he so suddenly determined that he could not wait for Violet's answer longer, but would go and get it. He did not even mention to his sister his destination, but as soon as his midday meal was eaten, he changed his every-day, dark grey clothes for his best suit of black and started for Edmundsbury.

Taffy, the old white cob he drove, had been purchased of a neighboring baker who since the transaction had always his tongue in his cheek when speaking of the curate. The young man's friends, too, had laughed at the deed but Betty had approved. Betty had seen the baker beat the white cob about the head with his clenched fist one day, and had not rested until Bill, as was usual, had constituted himself the victim. And Bill himself was content.

"I don't want spirited horse-flesh to drag me out once in a blue moon, and I'm never very much in a hurry," he explained.

It took him nearly three hours to accomplish the fourteen miles which separated Blow Weston from Edmundsbury, and the curate had plenty of time for reflection.

To be patient was Bill's nature, but he told himself now that perhaps patience was out of place in a love affair. He had meant by his forbearance to show his confidence in the girl—and perhaps it had looked as if he had not cared.

Not cared! He cracked his whip smartly above the head of the old white horse, the blood came with a rush to his face. Not cared! He looked appealingly round on sky and trees, calling all nature to witness to the eagerness of his love.

It was some time before Taffy forgave him the indignity of that stroke of the whip. He kicked with stiff old hind legs, and stumbled with front ones; he lashed his tail over the rein, and hung his bridle upon the shafts; went through in fact his whole *répertoire* of ill manners before he started smoothly on his *cour* again. It was four o'clock before Carlyon passed the tower of St. Ethelred's Church, of which poor parish Violet's father was incumbent, and with much difficulty succeeded in turning Taffy's foolish old stubborn head into the Red Lion yard.

As he came out into the street and turned in the direction of the Beltons' house, it was as if the town had been present to him as the abode of his friend rather than of his love. It was the figure of Harringay he looked for, ahead of him, and down each turning. The footsteps that now and again threatened to overtake him, only he always hurried his speed and never looked behind—must be those of Harringay. When he turned into the street that led to the Beltons' house it was with a feeling of intensest relief he found it stretching quiet, hot and sunshiny, before him, empty of the figure which haunted his mind.

Dear old Harringay! It was a shame to have had

that inexplicable dread of meeting him—being clear of it, the curate was filled with remorse.

The garden of the Beltons' house was shut from the road by a tall flint wall over which the heads of a copper-beach, an acacia or two, some elder-bushes showed. When Carlyon reached the beginning of this wall, a green door which was set in it opened and a man came out.

Before recognition of that figure could be conveyed by the eyes to the brain, the curate knew whose it was. The two men met beneath the over-topping boughs of the copper-beach, a half-dozen yards from Violet's doorstep. They did not shake hands, nor did any greeting soever pass between them.

"Do you mind turning back with me for a few minutes?" Harringay asked, and they walked side by side till the boundary of the garden wall was reached.

Some of the younger Beltons were playing tennis beyond the acacia branches. An excited voice cried clear and shrill, "A love set! a love set! Hooray!"

Bill thought of the uncompleted court at Queen Anne's. The court that would never be finished now!

"I suppose you can guess what I have to tell you?" Harringay said. His face had paled but he lifted his head and looked at the other fiercely—at Bill with a shamed face and a hanging head.

"Yes," Bill assented miserably. "I suppose so."

"I won't ask for a light judgment," Harringay went on. "I will only ask you to believe that when we spoke together last, I, at any rate, thought that I was honest."

There was a pause; then, "I believe it," Bill said lowly.

If he had broken his stick across the other's back,

it is certain Harringay would not have been punished as those unexpected words punished him.

"Thank you," he said, and held his head still higher, his thin lips close shut, his jaw locked as if in pain.

When the pair had reached the end of that quiet street, where the shadows of the old houses, and of the tree-topped walls lay as if in the peace of centuries, they stopped.

"You won't be wanting to see any more of me, Carlyon," Harringay said. "In a month we shall be gone. In all probability we shall never come back."

"Violet is going with you?"

"Yes, Bill, you must blame me for all." He set his teeth for a moment when he had said that—for he had forced himself to say the words—they did not come from his heart. It was Violet who had been to blame—who else!—who had lured him with her foolish little baits till he had played, with eyes wide open, this dastard's part. "Violet is full of sorrow about you," he went on with an effort to say the decent thing, to be loyal to the girl, whom in that crisis he felt he hated and despised. "Perhaps you will go and see her?"

But Bill shook his head: "No," he said. "I think I may as well get back to Blow Weston. There doesn't seem to be much good in anything else, now."

Harringay was silent for a minute—indeed between every sentence, long pauses fell, each man making a huge effort to keep what emotion he felt well in hand, and free utterance being difficult.

Perhaps Harringay had not valued the curate's friendship at much—perhaps he had despised him a little, the long, narrow young man, with his boyish manners, his youthful outlook, his unambitious, in-

artistic, half-awakened nature, yet now a strange inclination to cling to what he had lost came over him. He would have given Violet, and Violet's easily won adoration without a grudging thought for the right to walk down Edmundsbury High Street at Bill Carlyon's side and no shadow between them!

"You will do me the credit to believe I feel badly about all this," he said. "If it could have been undone I would have undone it. It can't be undone. I thank you for everything, Carlyon. You are worth ten thousand of me—if Violet had only the sense to see it. Good-bye. I sha'n't see you again—but I sha'n't forget."

"Good-bye," Bill said.

They had reached the entrance of the street leading to the livery stables, and Carlyon turned abruptly down it on his way to stubborn, ungracious old Taffy, to Queen Anne's, to the unfinished tennis court. And Harringay stood where the roads met, and looked after the receding figure, feeling, with a sickening certainty, for ever precluding illusion on the subject, that the love of Violet Belton had been dearly bought at the price of one tithe of the disgust, and the remorse and the shame he felt.

He mentally followed that lost friend of his on his homeward journey; he saw how differently even the familiar landscape would look to the man whose heart was wounded almost to death, whose life was robbed of its delight. It was from his own lips his people would have to learn that his love had been false to him, his friend untrue. And Harringay knew that whoever blamed—the rector in his peevish irritation at having a favorite plan set aside, the sister in her narrow-minded incomprehension of the passion, the

inconsistency, the weakness of a man's nature—Carlyon himself would be the one to find excuses, to defend.

These things passed through his mind—and many more remorseful, bitter, pitiful thoughts—in a flash and all before Bill had reached the second lamp post from that at the corner of the street, where Harringay stood. For when he did reach that point he turned sharply back, and retracing his steps, came up to Harringay and put out his hand :

"I don't think we shook hands," Bill said simply. "Good-bye."

Harringay's eyes smarted for the relief of tears as he walked away, but no tears came. He sickened under the sense of inferiority, of degradation which he would have to carry through life. He looked with gloomy eyes and locked lips down the dull and common street before him as if it were his own future life he was looking into. "Is she worth it? Is she worth it?" was the intolerable burden of his thought. "Having walked through this mire to win her, she being won, do I want her—do I ever so little care?"

END OF PART I.

PART II.

Are these the skies we used to know
The budding wood, the fresh-blown mead?
Where are the springs of long ago?

CHAPTER I.

AFTER TEN YEARS.

"BETTY must come," the curate said. "I will go and fetch her."

The rector of Blow Weston had been married for a half score years, and his union had been blessed by the birth of several children—a contingency which had presented itself as a probability to everyone around him, but which Mr. Jervois persisted in regarding as a circumstance surprising as it was unwelcome, one which could not have recommended itself to the perception of the most far-seeing man.

When his youngest boy—there were five of them—was two years old, the symptoms of an illness from which there could be no recovery declared themselves in the head of the house, and with the illness a desire to have the children of his first wife by his side, grew and asserted himself.

The illness was likely to be a long and painful one. Mrs. Jervois herself was not averse from having a responsible person beside her to share the difficulties and disagreeables of the case. She consulted with her brother, still living at Queen Anne's in spite of more than one chance of preferment. The Rev. William Carlyon was no more ambitious than of yore, no more fond of change. He liked the place, he had enough for his needs, the people were fond of him. When the inevitably fatal result of the rector's illness was mentioned for the first time between brother and

sister, "They will give you Blow Weston and Crabberton," Mrs. Jervois had said, not without some natural bitterness.

"In that case you and the children won't have to turn out," Bill had answered; which assurance had been of great comfort to Caroline Jervois, already worrying herself and her stricken husband in a somewhat premature way about plans for her future and that of the boys.

"Of course, Peter is out of the question," Mrs. Jervois now said to her brother, talking over the matter of the father's desire for one of his children, "he has already taken his holiday. Betty won't like the interruption, and would be, besides, of small help and no comfort—you know how impossible Betty is. Emily, who now seems quite settled with that delightful family in Heidelberg and writes her father charming letters, must on no account be disturbed. Yet he is evidently fretting about it, and Doctor Watkins says he must not be thwarted—what is to be done?"

Then, "Betty must come. I will fetch her," said the curate.

It was on a raw afternoon in November that the Reverend William Carlyon arrived, in a somewhat breathless condition at the top of the seventy-two stairs leading to the flat in Wilmington Terrace, which, for a year past, had been the home of Peter and Betty Jervois.

When it had been first declared that, owing to his increasing family, the Reverend Eustace Jervois did not feel justified in sending his eldest son to college, Peter had taken the announcement calmly. It was

Betty who had been furious. She had written from Germany, where she was still at school, a letter to her father which had made him very uncomfortable—worse, which he was called on to resent, because in it allusions had been made to his second wife which that lady declined to have overlooked.

"You have now six sons," Caroline reminded her husband, "are you in a position to give them all a university education?"

Such a question required no answer; but Betty's letter was answered, and she was requested to spend her next yearly holiday in Heidelberg to save the expense of the journey home.

Betty had written only one line in reply to this request.

"Home? where is my home?" she had written in her fierce, impulsive way. "My dear mother's children have no home; and that my father knows."

To the rectory she, at least, would never go again; and, not being of that wisdom which keeps its own counsel, she wrote to that effect, roundly, and in so many words. It was a decision that freed the rector from a good many annoyances—the constant friction between his eldest daughter and his wife was an experience to escape from by any means. It was only when his mortal illness seized him that things looked different, and that nature re-asserted herself.

When the time came for Betty to leave school she declined a very advantageous offer which was made her to stay as English governess with a family of whom she was fond. Only one could fill the post—let Emily take it—Emily who had no other prospect and whom the life would suit. It would not suit Betty. But she was not without resource. She

wrote to Peter, whose career which his sisters had firmly expected would be great, had ended in a civil service clerkship and a salary of a hundred a year, proposing to share with him for a year or so.

"I won't cost you much, and in the end I will pay you back, and much more," she had said with confidence.

She had lived with her brother for more than a year in Wilmington Terrace; and the days when he should be "paid back" seemed sometimes very near, sometimes impossible of realization.

On this November afternoon she was more than usually depressed. She had walked through fog and a drizzling rain to the Art School she attended in the morning; through fog and a drenching rain she returned in the afternoon. Everything had been wrong, the light, the model, the position of her easel, the atmosphere of the overheated room. The students, chattering in the passages, laughing over their work, throwing lumps of charcoal and pellets of bread at each other across the room, had irritated her sadly. She could not comfortably despise them, because, looking around on that afternoon, it seemed to her that most of them were far cleverer than she. And they worked with light hearts, not caring. The professor, whom, according to her mood and his attitude toward her work, she adored or detested, standing at her back, influenced, likewise, by the master, perhaps, had said one or two cruel things to her about the bad construction, the false proportion, the unmeaning modelling of her subject. After which he had wound up with his usual sighing formula. "You can do better, you know, much better. However, go on, go on," and had so passed to the next easel.

After that Betty had sat on her " donkey " before her condemned work for half an hour, her hands in her lap doing nothing, glowering fiercely upon the irrepressible army of students around her. How unconcerned and flippant they seemed, even after the professor had passed behind them, crushing them severally as was his wont. It was because they did not care they did so well! Not one among them had such an eager desire to succeed as she. Probably not one among them was crippling a brother's slender resources until such time as she could earn enough for daily bread. Was there one among the frivolous crew who felt within her that strong craving—a hunger for recognition merely—which Betty took to be a guarantee of her power? One, who after every rebuff had clenched hands and teeth and reared indomitable front, saying " I will! I will! "

This certainly recurring mood was not hers at present. It was impossible to work longer that afternoon. She put away the temporarily detested drawing materials and went.

In the passage she had encountered the professor on his way to pupils in the portrait room. On the impulse of the moment she spoke to him, an unusual proceeding on the part of a student, for, in spite of an encouraging urbanity of manner, when not engaged on criticising their works his pupils held the great man in considerable awe.

" I can't work this afternoon," said Betty, attacking him, as with a smile and a bow, he would have hurried past. " You have utterly disheartened me."

" Indeed? I am sorry," he said, smiling upon her with his head on one side as she stood before him, a picturesque and charming figure in her painting blouse

of "butcher" blue. He was better acquaint with the back views of his pupils than their faces, and there were among them many attractive figures and noticeable heads of hair. For his convenience their names were written upon their easels, and he did not always couple names and faces correctly when the latter smiled upon him, meeting him on stairway or in corrider. But there was an unusualness, either attractive or the reverse, according to the taste of the beholder, about Betty Jervois which always established her identity. "You must not be discouraged, Miss Jervois," he said sweetly.

"Shall I succeed? Is there any sense in my going on? Shall I ever do anything?" Betty asked him imperiously. She affected to despise his opinion sometimes. She had often told herself that though the professor might be able to teach, it was impossible for him ever to become an artist in the sense that she felt herself to be one. Yet now her tone was fierce from anxiety and her heart stood still to hear his answer.

"You have made great progress. Go on, by all means, to be sure," the professor said, and again with the smile and the sidelong bow of the head was slipping past, but Betty stopped him with a further question.

"Tell me this. It is of the utmost importance to me that I know. Am I better than the others—the crowd? Is there more hope of me than of them? I want to know. Tell me honestly."

"You must remember that our students are of a very high average," he said, sweeping slowly from his brow the long black hair against which his delicate thin hand showed in such pleasing contrast. "To

hold your own at such a level is sufficient in the present, I think. You hold your own, Miss Jervois."

So Betty put on her scarcely dried cloak, unfurled her umbrella, and shivering from the contrast of the unkindly outdoor atmosphere with the sweltering condition of the room heated to the requirements of the naked model, went home to Wilmington Terrace in no very elated mood.

And when she, too, had mounted the nine flights of stone steps, and passed the nine stone balconies, guarded by iron rails upon which each flat looked out she reached, weariedly enough, her own particular domain. And there was the curate of Blow Weston, standing patiently beneath his umbrella, looking forth upon the blurred, depressing landscape as seen above the iron rail.

On one other occasion the Reverend William Carlyon had scaled those heights and made an unexpected descent upon Betty and Peter in their lofty but hardly exalted retreat. For Caroline Jervois had been shocked and filled with forebodings when she had heard of Betty's scheme. To live alone in a flat with a brother scarce older than herself—a girl of Betty's daring and self-willed disposition, and of the peculiar and noticeable appearance! Who could tell what mischief—even what disgrace might result? The rector shook his head, staring helplessly, saying nothing. It was far less trouble to agree with his wife, who was ingenious in finding up daily, fresh matters of worry and irritation, than to disagree. It was marvellous how, in a question vitally concerning his own flesh and blood, he could be so apathetic, Caroline thought.

But to Caroline's brother the rector had said: "Go and have a look at the boy and girl, Bill, and say a word of his responsibility to Peter, and caution Betty. Will you?"

Betty had been twenty years of age on that first occasion when her childhood's friend had seen her, with the familiar touzle of her aggressive hair subdued into a knot at the back of her head, come to woman's estate! All through that first visit Carlyon had been vexed and perplexed by that mysterious, indescribable change from girl to woman. Pull down the coils of curling dark red hair, shorten the skirt a half foot, and there was the Betty of the old days, of fun, of rebellion, of disaster. And yet—

But a year with its effort, its strain, its disappointments, its experience of exhausting work in overheated rooms, of daily walks in ugly, common streets, of the sadness and depression of life in a neighborhood of anxious toilers, had left its mark. Between twenty and twenty-one a gap was fixed. It almost seemed to Carlyon as he looked at the pale and tired face of the girl before him in her rain-soaked cloak, that she and the Betty who had been a child in the days when he, as it looked to him now, had been a boy, had very little in common.

"Bill! I'm so glad!" she said. But he noticed that her gladness was not great enough to dispel the weariness of her voice, although her tired face brightened a little, and the luminous grey eyes looked at him with a serious friendliness. "Nothing is the matter, is there? They wrote me my father is not very well. He is not worse?"

"Not worse, to speak of," the curate said and Betty, having regarded him questioningly again, produced

the latch-key from her pocket, opened the door of the flat and led the way in.

"I expect you'll have to help me to light the fire," she said, "I always tell the charwoman to lay it ready for kindling, but—there, you see—she hasn't done it. She is a beautifully consistent person. One always knows she hasn't done things." She went down on her knees and began angrily, with much racket and dust-raising, to rake the morning's ashes from the grate. "There will be poor Peter coming home, and no fire and no hot water!" she explained.

She went out to the kitchen and came back with her hands full of matches and fire-lighters: "I'm sorry for you too," she said to Carlyon.

He took the things from her, and unfastened her wet cloak and pushed a chair toward her; "Sit there and rest, and see me light the fire," he said. "I've lit scores of 'em. They know the master-hand. You'll hear it crackling in no time."

She was too tired and cross and depressed to prevent him. She sat in Peter's armchair and looked at the big man kneeling on the hearth.

Carlyon also had changed and developed in the ten years which had given Betty her undesired step-brothers, and was broad now in proportion to his height. His once tow-colored hair had darkened considerably and was clipped close to his head. Some lines had cut themselves about his mouth, sweet-natured as of yore, and about the blue eyes, shining kindly as ever from his pleasant, florid face.

"Dear old Bill! He has grown quite presentable," Betty said to herself superciliously, but with a little regret. He had been dearest when he had been the silly, laughing, long-legged old Billy of the past.

"Where have you got your experience in fire-making and kettle-boiling?" she asked him, but he did not reply, nor did she need an answer who knew that he had kindled fires on many a cold hearth. When his people were ill the curate insisted that they should have fires in their bedrooms; Betty had helped him a score of times to trundle down to this sick house and that a barrow of coals from his own cellar. In a case where there had been no bedroom stove she remembered how he had himself wrapped his patient—a woman suffering from bronchitis and pneumonia—in blankets and carried her in his arms to the impromptu bed he had constructed for her beside the downstairs fire. Betty and the little sisters had acted that scene many a time, Betty staggering under the weight of the year younger Emily, Ian, by reason of the cushion-like properties of her soft, rotund little frame enacting the part of unpremeditated couch.

The curate had been but a slight, young fellow in those days, Betty thought he looked strong enough to carry woman, bed and all, if need were, to-day.

When the firelight shone upon the little sitting-room, it looked a cheerful, home-like place enough. The big bookcase, filling one side of the room, was loaded not with books, but with Peter's butterfly and moth cases, and with his various appliances for catching, relaxing, and setting the insects. Two other sides were nearly covered by photographs, sketches, and caricatures, done by Betty and her friends, and stuck with drawing-pins on the badly papered walls. The big bow window, red-curtained, and with a plant or two on one of the window seats, all but filled the fourth side. The fog hid the cross on the top of St.

Pancras Church which was very little above the level of the window.

Cold and rain and discomfort were all on the outside; the professor's verdict was not altogether discouraging. Betty had failed and fallen short of herself because she was fagged and wanted rest. To-morrow all things would look brighter.

The visitor had gone into Peter's bedroom to wash the coal-dust from his hands. Betty got up, pulled off her hat, and peeped in the little over-mantel to see if her hair was in condition. She had no fear of unfrizzed, draggled locks, the wetter the weather, the more unruly the wind, the more pronounced became the undulations of her dark red hair. She wondered if Bill Carlyon had the sense to see how nice-looking she was. Her experience of the sex did not allow her any serious anxiety on the subject, and Betty was woman enough to value her attractiveness but not too highly. She was glad that the line of her face, from ear to firmly-moulded chin, was perfect, as an aspiring young artist friend had told her lately, that her cheek was an even, healthy whiteness, that her grey eyes were black-fringed—but these things were of less moment to her than her art. According to some tastes she was the handsomest girl in the Walker School life class, but she would have changed places gladly with the diminutive creature in sand-colored hair and spectacles, who had taken the scholarship last year.

The curate came back into the room and placed himself beside her, and they looked into each other's faces in the glass.

"You've grown broader, Bill," she said, smiling at his reflection.

"You've grown older, Betty."

"You mean I've lost my girlish look? I've noticed it. You see I work rather hard; and I'm anxious; and I don't get on as I thought I should."

"Chuck it up and come back to Blow Weston."

"Not for worlds! I would sooner chuck up my life." She turned her back upon the looking-glass and stood with her hands behind her, staring with knit brows at the opposite wall, "If I work till I die I won't give up. There is no power in heaven or hell to take me back to Blow Weston."

"Do you know what I have come for?" the curate asked her quietly. "I have come to take you back with me to-morrow."

"Never. You can go back without me."

"My dear child, you will have to come."

"You mean that my father is dying?"

"Not actually at this moment. He may live for another year—for longer, even—but he will never be well again."

Betty was silent, setting her lips.

"It is Caroline who has sent for me," she said presently. "Why should I ruin my life and give up my career for—Caroline?"

"It is your father who wants you, Betty."

The set lips trembled for an instant, and a tear sparkled through the black lashes and lay on the white cheek. The curate watched it with an odd sensation. On those rare times when child-Betty had cried, he had dabbed her tears with his own pocket-handkerchief. He remembered an occasion, her grief having been unusually stormy, when, by way of compensation and at her own request, he had carried her pick-a-back, from the rectory to Queen Anne's.

Such modes of consolation were denied him now. For this reason, perhaps, her tears affected him more. He laid his hand upon her shoulder:

"You will be ready to go back with me to-morrow?" he said.

She flung off his hand and walked across the room and faced him there: "Neither to-morrow, nor to-morrow, nor to-morrow!" she said, "my father chose his companion. His children have been ousted from their places. He has no right to make any call upon us. I will not ruin my life for him."

"The kettle is boiling," said Carlyon.

"I will not—do you hear?" she said glaring back at him from the doorway through which she was passing "I will not."

Then she went and fetched the tea-tray from the kitchen, and he watched her lay the cloth and make the tea, and cut the bread and butter. He noticed that she performed these offices with an uncalled for emphasis, expressing a firm and spirited determination to have her own way.

"There is Emily—there is Peter," she said flashing the information at him, as she dabbed the butter on the loaf—"all are my father's children although he may have forgotten. Why should I be asked to give up my career? Who fixed on me to go? Let it be Emily or Peter."

It is noticeable that she did not also say, "Let it be Ian." Ian was safe out of such discussion for ever—dead and hidden away in the German burial ground. She had died of diphtheria during her first term at school.

"It seemed to me that you were the fittest to go, and I came for you," said the unmoved curate.

"Then you may go back again—you may go for Emily," Betty declared. She wheeled a chair up to the table and majestically intimated to him that he was to sit down and eat.

He complied without any misgivings. The child is mother of the woman, he knew; and he had known the child Betty very well. He had seen her struggle fiercely for her own way before, and, having gained it, fling away her advantage apparently without a pang. He had been hungry and thirsty as well as cold and wet, and he kept the girl employed in ministering to his wants. They laughed together over his appetite for bread and butter, not diminished since the days when he had swooped upon the children's thick slices at the schoolroom tea.

"If I go on like this in ten years I shall be as fat as a pig, I expect," he remarked as the loaf grew less and less.

"You'll be forty-seven. It won't much matter what you are by that time."

"Thank you. Why?"

"Married and done with! You won't expect me to take the least interest in you when once you're married?"

"I remember your antipathy to the marriage state. I remember how you flung things about, and stamped and wept when they told you Ted Harringay was married."

He said the name naturally enough, and had never shunned it. Whatever wound had been dealt him by the man was healed, all but forgotten now.

Betty laughed; "I wonder what made me so adore that person. And he was a wretch to me—yet the very fact of his presence in the place was an intense

happiness! Little fool! I've still got, treasured up somewhere his old cap and some bits of used-up pencils of his. What an odd little idiot I must have been, Bill!"

"I don't know," Carlyon said. "I think there was a charm about him. Even the people who—who ought to have kicked him, liked him. It was all natural enough."

"I don't believe in his charm," said Betty, wrinkling her brow as she always did when conversation became retrospective. "Looking back at him I see no charm. I see an unscrupulous person, selfish to a degree, lazy and indifferent to the backbone, with a manner supercilious to the verge of incivility, with an unveiled contemptuousness of much that is dear and sweet and sacred in the minds of other people. Clever, of course. I believe still that he could have been, if he had cared, a splendid artist."

She looked up as she spoke at an oval picture in oils on the wall above her head—the one picture in the room which, although unfinished, boasted a frame. An elf-like, white face, with haunting, large grey eyes, looking out from an exaggerated tangle of deep red hair. The hair filled all the background of the picture, the eyes with their resistless appeal, had seemed at times to those who beheld to fill the room.

"It's like you in an odd, uncanny way, but it isn't flattering," the curate said, "and it is—uncomfortable."

Betty got up and went close to the picture and looked deep into the representation of her own eyes. "People who come here cry, 'How hideous?'" she said. "'That meant for you! At any time of life! A libel!' In saying that they write themselves down asses, you know. Did an artist come along—but one

never does—he would fall down and worship, as I used to worship him."

She came back to the table and sat down: "Where is he, I wonder?" she said.

"His father and mother are dead, and so, you know, are hers. Some one said the Harringays were coming back to Edmunsbury to settle down—"

"I'm sure I don't care what they do, do you?" Betty asked, flippant of tone, but earnest of gaze, "Do you care where they go, or what they do, Bill?"

And the curate, quiet and composed beneath her scrutiny, confessed that to a certain extent he did care, because he had once been fond of them both and thought kindly of them still, but that in the way he used to care he cared no longer. He hoped they were both very happy, and that was all.

"Then you may be quite sure they aren't," Betty assured him with calm conviction. "'Why?' Because Violet was an affectionate namby-pamby, bound to develop into a fretful, exacting, jealous woman. She was always an irritating, witless creature, you remember, and he'll have frightened out of her what glimmer of intellect she had, long ago. And he hates a fool. Because her beauty was simply the beauty of youth and delicate coloring, and won't stand the wear of years and tears. And he worships beauty. No. Wherever they are, they aren't happy. And I'm glad of it."

Presently Peter came in, and greeted the curate in his stolid way.

"If Peter found the Bishop of London having tea with me in the flat he wouldn't show the smallest emotion," Betty declared. "If Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, the Princess of Wales, and all the Royal Family were to greet him on his return from the

office, he wouldn't take the interest he does in the moth on the window-pane, or the spider's nest in the corner."

"Oh, give us the loaf and don't jaw," Peter said, and she handed him the two crusts remaining.

"Bill is responsible for the rest," she said, and Peter munched at his crusts uncomplainingly.

"I've been to the Natural History Museum—that's why I'm late," he said. "I was right about the moth young Armytage gave me, Betty. I identified it at once. It's the 'lobster.' We must be careful how we set him. And by the way, you're all right, Betty. They think a heap of you at the Walker."

"Absurd!" said Betty, her face kindling, her eyes telegraphing excited questionings.

"Fact, Johnson—I told you your professor visits with Johnson's people—Johnson missed you at the Walker to-day and he came on to me—wanted to come home here, but I shook him off. The professor says you've got a lot of cleverness—you're promising—you'll do something. Johnson says you mustn't take to heart the professor's dropping down on you—it's his system. Those that have got grit hold on and are the better for it—it clears off the feeble sort."

Betty's face, with the glow of gratified triumph shining through was wonderful. The curate gazed at it as if he saw it for the first time.

"Oh, Peter! Do you really believe it?" she said, breathing the words in a soft rapture. Her eyes turned from her brother's face to Carlyon's—and the rapture died out, the glow faded, the face became pale and tired again, the voice lifeless. "It's of no use, Peter," she said. "I've got to give it all up, our father is ill, and has sent for me, I'm going home with Bill Carlyon to-morrow."

CHAPTER II.

A HOME-COMING.

THEY had the railway carriage for the greater part of the way to themselves. Betty's face was as the ghost of the face the curate had seen for a few moments yesterday, and she was for a long time very quiet.

"Of how little importance are our resolves, our wishes, the things that alone seem to us to make life endurable in this most destable world!" she said once. "Yesterday morning I was saying to myself that I supposed I should live in a flat with Peter for the rest of my natural life—or in a flat with Johnson—"

The curate opened astonished eyes. "With Johnson?"

"He is at the Walker school, and he is also a friend of Peter's. He comes to see us a good deal. I think he was beginning to fall in love with me."

"It's quite time you came home, then," the curate said, and banged down the window impressively.

"It did no harm," said Betty.

"You mean you have not fallen in love with Johnson?"

"No. I haven't done that. I am not quite sure about him, even, you know. But if he had asked me, I should have married him. It would have taken me off Peter's hands, and Johnson and I could have worked together."

"You can work very well at home without any Johnson," said the curate shortly. He was appalled at the danger which had been run. Of what had they all been thinking? This Betty was too precious a thing to leave so lightly guarded!

Once again in the course of the journey she mentioned the hated Johnson's name: "Perhaps he only made it up to please me," she said pensively. "He has done a lot of quite foolish things to please me, lately. Perhaps he made the poor professor say it."

That this was more than likely, the curate eagerly admitted, and could barely keep himself from adding that he had conceived a low opinion of Johnson. He could not tell if he was more relieved or concerned to find that, except in so far as he had given a true report or the reverse of the professor's dictum, Johnson held no interest whatever for the lady who was prepared to share his flat with him.

As they drew nearer home, and the landscape took on familiar features, the Art School, and all the hopes and fears connected with her work there, faded from Betty's mind; she looked about her with a sad and tender gaze.

"How every memory becomes poisoned for us as we go on!" she said. "I remember hearing my mother say 'Let them have a happy childhood; whatever life robs them of, it can't rob them of that.' But I can't look back to mine without the cruellest pain, Bill. The contrast with everything that now is possible is so dreary."

"My dear child! At twenty-one how can you tell what is or is not possible?"

"I feel like a ghost coming back to its old haunts.

I declare I am as chill as a ghost. Feel my hands. I wonder if I shall meet any more of the shades—Peter, in his Eton jacket, Emily, hiding always behind my skirts, and darling, fat, jolly, little Ian? Don't we sometimes haunt Queen Anne's, Bill—poor little ghosts, sending out faint shouts for you to come and play? Do you sometimes see us there?"

"Often," Bill said gently, "oftenest a little ghost, with an odd, pale little face, and crimson hair, perches itself on my library steps, assures me her locks are a lovely shade of auburn, and announces that she intends to draw pictures for *Punch*."

Betty listened wistfully, with far-away eyes, "I always like to picture Ian here," she said, "I try to forget that wretched German school, and those last sad months. I try—but I can't forget—"

"Dear Betty, don't think about it now, dear."

"Poor Ian, how she tried to be sweet to them all! You know that way of hers for which I used to punish her, Bill—that way of being all things to all men—of trying by any means to win them. It was so pathetic to see these small wiles of hers all wasted and misunderstood! And these German girls—they lied like the father of lies themselves, and the teachers lied, and the principal lied, but when poor little Ian was found out in one of her innocentest, most transparent fibs—oh, the wickedness of it, the terrible measures that had to be adopted to drive out the lying spirit!"

"You used to be pretty hard on that propensity yourself, Betty."

"I wasn't then. I raged. I said that they were all liars, and that we were taught to lie. I said that if we did not lie, we could not exist in such a wretched

den. When Ian fell ill, they would not let me see her. No one but the nurse was allowed to go near her. But I went, I went in the dead of night, and the nurse was asleep—but not Ian. They said she had not been conscious—she was conscious enough to break one's heart. She spoke about you, Bill, and said how happy you must be at home with Paul. When the nurse awoke I would not be sent away, and Ian seemed better—and—all at once—she died."

"Dear child! All that is nearly ten years ago," Carlyon said. He looked at her with kind eyes full of pity, and leaned forward and smoothed and patted her hand. "Ten years!"

"And what if it were a hundred!" Betty cried, "Hasn't it been? Even eight hundred years wouldn't lessen by one pang the pain and the terror, and the strangeness of the sorrow that small spirit had to bear! Thanks to Caroline. I don't forget that it was thanks to Caroline, Bill."

It was as Carlyon had said ten years ago; and in ten years much had happened. The tragedy of little Ian's death which had troubled her, doubtless, at first, had slipped to the background of Mrs. Jervois's mind. There had been nothing in that untoward event with which she could reproach herself. She had been deceived in the desirability of the first school to which the girls had been sent, it was true; but when once convinced of the fact that the children were being half starved, and were enduring privations which could not but be harmful to any young, growing girls she almost immediately took measures to have them removed and more satisfactorily placed. Little Ian had succumbed too quickly; there were,

unfortunately, only two to benefit by the change. The idea that any blame in this, or any matter, could rest upon her head did not even occur to conscientious Caroline. The chambers of her mind, carefully swept and garnished, were ever free from such troublesome inmates as self-doubt and remorse and unavailing regret. She went out into the hall to greet the eldest daughter of the house, with every desire and intention of playing as usual the immaculate part. She lifted a cool cheek—a calm, little altered face, for Betty to greet. But Betty raising her own face from the caress seemed to see the little laughing face of Ian, peeping through the balusters at the newcomer, and turned away abruptly from her father's wife.

But in the interview with her father all the hardness died out of Betty's heart. How could it be otherwise with the strange familiarity of his own pathetic figure and its own surroundings gripping her heart with such relentless hand? In the library, the room in which Mr. Jervois habitually sat, it seemed to Betty that not a picture had been re-hung, not a book misplaced, hardly a chair disarranged in all these years. At any minute, surely, the door might open and Emily slide in; Ian, perhaps, was under the table, or peeping through the curtains pulled across the window. On the hearth, actually in the flesh, lay Paul the beloved cat—not altered a day since arrangements for the expected advent of the kittens had formed the staple subject of Ian's talk.

It was this unchangeableness rather than the change in her father's appearance which suddenly melted the anger in Betty's heart, robbed her limbs of strength, and sent her sobbing to her knees, her face hidden against the back of her father's old leather chair.

He let her cry uninterrupted for minutes, and she could feel with what painful effort, his own tears came from the depths to the surface. When she heard those caught sobbings of the breath, those spasmodic clickings in the throat, she restrained her own tears, and lifted her face.

"Dear father—it is so stupid of me—I am tired with the journey—and it is so long since I saw you," she got out brokenly in excuse of her weakness.

"I know I am changed," poor Mr. Jervois said, swallowing back the sobs in his throat, "I know you are weeping for me, Betty, but you mustn't do it, dear. You must spare me. I'm not strong enough for any emotion. You must be very careful not to upset me. Things must be smooth and pleasant about me—my child—remember that, dear, I beseech you—smooth and pleasant." He spoke through trembling fingers, with which he had covered his face, and through his flowing tears. "I think I feel a paroxysm coming on. My drops. Quickly, if you please—my drops."

Of course Betty knew nothing of his drops and had to summon her stepmother to administer them.

"You must be very careful not to excite your father," that lady said, afterwards, admonishing Betty with that prim serenity of tone the girl remembered and hated. "He suffers acutely if he is permitted to excite himself. To be of any service to him, you must exercise great self-control and be perfectly calm."

And Betty was not practiced in the exercise of self-control, and was by nature rather turbulent than calm.

"What good am I here?" she was before long in-

quiring reproachfully of the Reverend William Carlyon, resuming once more uncomplainingly his old rôle of martyr to Betty Jervois's moods. "At my art school I should be doing some good to myself, and I should be out of Caroline's way. She does not leave me alone with my father for an instant. Where is the good of our both sitting up to stare at the poor man? It would be less embarrassing to him, surely, for Caroline to stare alone. I may not talk lest I annoy, or excite, or depress him—not a sound but Caroline's level tones, her improving conversation is heard in the room. She won't trust me to pour out his medicine. If I hear him restless in the night I can't go to him—Caroline is there before me. I quite understand it is her place—I am not complaining—only why did you bring me here? What good am I?"

"Couldn't you help Caroline with the children?" the curate asked, for he had received his sister's confidence on the subject and knew how the land lay very well.

"I detest the children," said Betty with fervor.

"But, my dear girl, that is a feeling you should be ashamed of."

"If you begin to preach," said Betty who was sitting on the sofa in the little study at Queen Anne's, "I will throw this cushion at your head."

He was half-leaning against, half-sitting upon the table where his sermons were concocted. The books from which he shamelessly cribbed the gems of thought, scattered through those master-pieces lay around him in admired confusion. He had been interrupted in his literary efforts, but he did not appear to resent the intrusion. He crossed his arms on his

chest and looked at his visitor with a certain expression in his eye, as of things being very well with him indeed.

"I am not afraid of you nor your cushion," he announced. "I am going to tell you what I think. You are nearly always unjust—it is your feminine privilege—I have never known you ungenerous before. In the matter of these poor little children—" here he stopped a moment to catch the cushion that, sure enough, came flying at his head, "of whom, you will please to remember that I, for one, am very fond—"

"You aren't!" said Betty, interrupting him with a confident laugh. "It is the one thing that saves the situation. If you were to them what you were to us —if you ever—ever could be the same to mortal children again—life and the world, past and present, yourself and myself, would be too, too disgusting! I should have done with all."

"But then you were always a jealous baby," he reminded her, tightening his arms across his chest, his voice breaking down into an involuntary tenderness, reminiscent, perhaps, of her baby days.

Betty violently repudiated the idea: "It is Caroline who is jealous," she declared. "Do you know that she hates to see me with you? That she watches us? She even tried to prevent my coming here this morning. What do think she said? She said 'People would talk.' Imagine trying to frighten me, Betty Jervois, with the bogey of public opinion."

He laughed a little but he did not meeet her eyes.

"Who are the 'people,' and what will they say, do you suppose, Bill?"

"You are not to speak in that disdainful voice of

my old women. They'll probably say what they said in the old days. 'You're a spoilin' that little Miss Betty, sir, that you be!'"

Betty shook her head. "It wouldn't be true," she said. She got up slowly from the sofa, and the curate fetched his hat to accompany her through the meadow on her way home. "You don't spoil me any longer," she went on regretfully. "I only wish you would. But you are afraid of Caroline. I am sorry; because it is so long since anyone spoilt me."

"My modes are different—but I expect I spoil you still," the curate said a little sadly, "I expect I shall spoil you to the end of the chapter."

And Betty, turning matters over in her mind, had firmly resolved that he should. They had to pass the sunk tennis-court at which Carlyon and his little friends had labored so hopefully long ago: "You finished it, after all," Betty said, nodding her head in that direction.

"After all," he acquiesced. "You see the world didn't come to an end, Betty. Contrary to expectation, it went on much as usual. And the court is generally in capital condition."

"I suppose you've heard the Harringays are really expected at Edmundsbury? some of the Belton girls were over last week full of the prospect of having Violet again. For my part I hope they'll keep her. I hope they'll keep them both. You remember, in even my baby days, I could not be civil to Violet?"

"I remember it well. So doubtless does she."

"And as for her husband I can now see that he was detestable."

"Nonsense!" said the curate. "Harringay was a man all women liked and some men too. I liked him

for one. His taste and yours are the same—you and he are very likely to become fast friends again before the finish."

The curate's predictions were right as the sequel proved, but other things came to pass before they were realized.

CHAPTER III.

FRICTION.

That dread disease from which Mr. Jervois suffered was slow in its action. His weakness increased daily but imperceptibly. It seemed to those about him that he suffered more from depression of spirits than from pain of body.

"All I ask for is—peace!" he would say, spreading appealing hands abroad. "Surely, surely that, for one in my suffering state, is little to ask. For pity's sake let me have peace!"

And the sad fact was that where Betty and her stepmother foregathered there was no peace, and the fault was not altogether Caroline's.

She was a woman with whom duty, as she conceived it, was paramount, a most conscientious, careful, unbending woman. Where others did not see with her eyes, she accounted it to them for wilful sin. On every subject about which two opinions were possible, it was a foregone conclusion that Betty would cling to one of them with no less pertinacity than that wherewith Caroline would hold on to the other. And this not only in big matters but in those of small importance.

"You see, I hate her," Betty would explain with her embarrassing frankness to Caroline's brother. "When you hate a person you've got to show it for your self-respect's sake, Bill."

"My place is at your father's side; to be of service to me, you must take my place with the children," Caroline continually said.

But Betty and the children were not sympathetic.

The first lot of little Jervoises had been fond of animals, had loved outdoor life, had insisted on freedom. The second liked their books, and played mild games of draughts, or of halma for recreation. The two eldest, with their mother's assistance, in their literary efforts, were honored little contributors to the children's page of "The English Lady's Own."

"Your five little nephews are of the genus *prig*, in short," their stepsister informed their uncle.

The children were used to their mother's methodical rule, and Betty's careless disregard of nursery laws, and her contemptuous disapproval of cherished tasks was a surprise, and one which they resented. There were constant appeals from the new authority to the old:

"I will not have my children taught to disobey me," cried Caroline.

"While I am with them I expect them to obey me," Betty retorted.

"For heaven's sake let me have peace!" entreated the poor invalid with that pathetic stretching forth of his hands.

Betty was filled with wrath. In spite of her refractoriness her heart ached for pity. She tried in a thousand ways to be of comfort to her father; but her ways were never those that Caroline could approve. When, after a temporary absence, the wife would return to the library to find the invalid, wrapped and swallowed in Betty's garments, about to steal forth into the sunshine on Betty's arm, con-

scientiously believing the exercise bad for him, the wife would dispute his exit.

"The air would cheer him and do him untold good!" Betty would protest.

"It rained this morning and the air is damp!" Caroline would declare.

"Come along, father," the rebellious Betty would persist.

"Eustace, I entreat you not to run the risk," Caroline would implore.

"Do what you like with me, but for heaven's sake don't quarrel over me," the hapless victim would beg. With his own hand he would unwind the shawl about his shoulders and take off his cap. He longed for the air and the sunshine, perhaps; and to hear what Betty had to tell him of Peter and Peter's friends, and her life in the flat in Wilmington Terrace. But he knew that Caroline, his inestimable, most excellent Caroline, must have her own way.

"I hate to distress you, Eustace," Mrs. Jervois said to her husband, "but I must ask you to use your influence with Betty. She and my brother are a great deal too much together. People will talk."

"Bill?" asked the rector, opening dull eyes upon her. "What possible harm can Bill do? We can't very well ask your brother to keep away from the house, Caroline."

"But you can ask Betty to keep away from his house," cried Caroline with asperity. "She is constantly running across to Queen Anne's. She is not a child, remember, any longer, and my brother is still a young man. I don't consider such proceedings seemly, or even modest, sorry as I am to say so."

"You can't expect me, in my state of health, to enter into a controversy with Betty," the invalid groaned. "You know what a strong character the girl has. It is Bill who must take measures, of course. I prefer to leave the matter in Bill's hands."

Mrs. Jervois set her lips tightly. "On the subject of Betty it is impossible to speak to Bill," she declared.

The invalid shut his eyes and demonstratively sighed. "It is a little hard—a little hard, I think, that at this juncture of my life, I should be bothered with such details! I am not long for this world. It is not for much I ask, any more."

"It is a pity Betty ever came home," Caroline said, and this phrase, having been reiterated often enough in the invalid's ears, the day came, as Caroline had known it would, when the rector said: "Then let Betty go back again."

But Betty, to everyone's surprise, would not go. It was her father, worked up to the sticking-point by his wife, who at last gave Betty her release.

"Go back to your work and to Peter," he said. "It is dull for you here, and—I shall not die just yet—we can manage without you well enough, Betty."

"But if you don't want me, I want you, father," Betty had said. "I am your eldest daughter—while you are ill my place is at your side. You may be quite sure I will never leave you."

An assurance which filled Mr. Jervois with as much apprehension as gratitude.

"She shall not turn me out of my father's house a second time," Betty declared, fierce-eyed to the curate to whom she at once carried the news of her successful circumvention of her stepmother's plans.

"I believe my sister honestly thought you would like to be back at your school," the curate felt himself compelled to say, "with the beloved professor, you know, and with—Johnson."

"Your sister certainly prefers me to be with them—or with any one—to my being with you!" Betty cried. At which Mr. Carlyon looked deeply into the bowl of his pipe and said nothing.

"Do you know that you're something like Johnson?" after a moment of consideration—"not in look, at all, but in being always a little afraid of me, in being so frequently shocked."

"What measures did you take to shock poor Johnson?"

"You know you are always doubtful about what I'm going to say next; and at this moment in your heart of hearts you're shocked that I'm sitting here in your room talking to you, against Caroline's orders. Isn't that true?"

"It is true that I know I have to thank Caroline's prohibition for bringing you here so often."

Betty laughed, without denying the imputation. "But isn't it absurd?" she asked, "What possible harm—after all these years—can there be in you and me being friends?"

"No possible harm. All the good in the world," the curate hastened to assure her.

Probably Betty had needed no assurance on the point—had only asked her question with the laudable intention of putting Bill Carlyon "in a hole." The idea of her old ally being converted into her lover might have been slow in presenting itself but for Caroline's well-meant precautions, but the idea, once suggested, proved by no means disagreeable to her.

She thought a great deal on the subject in these dull, and otherwise empty days, and asked herself with much interest was it possible? Had he got it in him to fall in love? Dared he? It would be very entertaining if it were so—and much funnier than the Johnson episode at which Peter and she had laughed. To see his stepmother baffled and set at nought, would add very much to the amusement.

"You're a kind of a sort of an uncle, you know," she reminded him, "I think I shall call you 'Uncle Bill,' as the children do."

But the curate did not appear eager for that promotion, and, except now and again, and entirely for purposes of coquetry, Betty did not remember so to call him.

CHAPTER IV.

"WE FOUR."

In such, not too harmonious fashion, as far as Betty Jervois and her surroundings were concerned, the slow months crept away. Christmas—such a melancholy Christmas!—was passed, and through the cold of the lengthening days came now and again a bird's note, a primrose tint in the afternoon sky, a scent of vegetating earth, reminding Betty as she walked the fields and lanes of Blow Weston, that spring was coming.

And before the spring was fully here came Violet Harringay.

She came in her carriage, alone in sumptuous state, garmented in sealskin from head to heel, and swathed in bearskin rugs. In spite of which costly protection from the keen, frosty air she was seen to be shivering through all her frame when she alighted. She was full of tearful sympathy for the illness of "Uncle Eustace," full of tearful gladness at the sight of Betty in her strange womanly beauty, filled with tender reminiscences—all tearful.

She was thinner than of yore, and the familiar nervousness and timidity of her bearing had increased. The shyness and shrinking humility which had been becoming enough in a girl of twenty did not sit with such a charming grace on the young matron of thirty. The rose and the lily tints of her complexion, which had been so marvellously delicate and distinct, had

merged a little, looked a tiny bit rubbed, perhaps; and a perpendicular line or so had wrinkled itself above her small, straight nose; the lips were thinner and less red, and a trifle dragged at the corners—but the alteration after all was slight: she was scarcely less pretty, they all said, when she had driven away again.

But a great misfortune had overtaken Edward Harringay's wife—she was deaf.

She did not allude to this infirmity—either she was not aware of the extent of her own misfortune, or the grief of it was too intimate to bear speaking of. The rectory people discovered for themselves that they had to shout into one ear to make themselves audible—and that with the other ear she could not hear at all.

A very short intercourse reduced Mr. Jervois to a condition of collapse. He lay back in his chair trembling, and with the tears of weakness running down his face. "Take her away," he said irritably to Betty who leaned over him, and waving a feeble hand in his niece's direction. "Never—never, do you hear? —bring her near me again."

So Mrs. Harringay happily unconscious of the effect she had produced, had to be taken into the school-room. It was the children's walking hour, and the room was deserted. Violet looked round upon the familiar place—at the tiny wooden chair, painted green, which had been Ian's especial property, at the old piano where the curate had practiced his songs—and as she looked, the tears which had been in her eyes through that painful interview with her uncle, flowed unrestrainedly down her face.

"So much has happened! So much—since then,"

she said apologetically, in the indistinct whispering voice of the very deaf.

Betty found it impossible to shout sentimental commonplaces on the subject. She looked upon her cousin's emotion with curious eyes, wondering what Violet's experiences had been, trying to guess at some of the things that had happened.

Mrs. Harringay moved softly about the room, striving to regain her self-possession, fingering with a tender touch a book here, a writing-desk there. She opened the piano and pulled off her glove to run a hand over the keys, but paused before a sound had come, letting her hand fall noiselessly. Presently, mistress of herself again, she turned from the piano and went to sit by Betty's side.

"How happy we all were, dear," Violet said, "and we never knew it!"

Betty nodded, looking before her with tightly set lips. She did not often suffer herself to think of that happiness of which she considered she had been robbed.

"How I loved you all!" Violet whispered on. "I thought little Ian's death would have broken my heart. You must tell me all about her death some day, Betty."

Betty's lips set tighter; she shook her head.

"Did you know that my little girl also died?" Violet inquired after a pause. "Would you like to know her name? 'Janet, Emily, Elizabeth,' after you three. I should have called her Ian if she had lived. I have never had another child, Betty."

"Are you sorry?" Betty shouted to her. "Is Mr. Harringay sorry?"

"Ted? I don't know. He never told me."

"How funny!" said Betty, with considering eyes

upon her cousin's face. She gazed at the sweet-looking wife, trying to picture the man who was her husband shouting into the poor deaf ear; feeling her own ancient interest in him revive, quickening her speculations as to what he thought of many things.

"Um-m-m-m?" Violet inquired, drawing out the interrogation in a slowly ascending scale, and anxiously advancing the more serviceable ear, "What did you say, dear Betty?"

"I said, 'How funny!'" said Betty, with a little shame of the inappropriate phrase.

Violet gave the sweet vague smile with which she always greeted any remark whose drift she did not understand. She looked very wistfully into Betty's face.

"Ted used to say you would be a beauty. I wonder if he'd think you are," she said.

"I wonder!" Betty laughed. "He'd better come to see. Why didn't he come? I remember him very well."

"My dear, he is not at Edmundsbury! I left him in Paris. He could not quite determine if to stay on there for a time. He has been all over the world since you saw him, Betty."

"And you with him?" Betty enquired.

"And you with him?" she repeated. She put her question first to one ear and then to the other. As she became better acquainted with Mrs. Harringay, she learnt that the pathetic vague smile with which that lady answered a remark to which she did not wish to reply was not always a sign she had not heard it.

"Does he paint still?" Betty asked. At which inquiry Violet kindled.

"He paints when he is inclined," she said. "If he

wished it he could make a name as a painter, Betty. In Paris he has met with the greatest appreciation."

"How delightful that must be!" Betty said with shining eyes, her face aglow. "Tell him to come here —can't you, Violet?—I should like to hear about his pictures."

The color came creeping into Mrs. Harringay's face. "I was afraid that perhaps his coming here might be a little awkward, a little unpleasant," she whispered.

Betty gazed at her cousin's blushes with a certain angry contempt. "Do you mean Bill—?" she asked, "Bill Carlyon? He often says how much he liked Mr. Harringay and how he hopes to meet him again."

And at that moment, as it happened, the door opened and the curate came in.

He had heard of Violet's presence in the house, and he came across the room to meet his old love without a trace of self-consciousness or embarrassment. Betty watched him keenly. If he had quivered or quailed in that moment, if he had, by the tremor of an eyelid, justified the blushes on Violet's face, she felt that she would never have forgiven him. As it was, her heart swelled with gratification and pride in her friend. It was a boy upon whom that insult had been put, it was a man, Betty told herself, who avenged himself by showing that it was forgotten.

She sat apart for a few minutes, for Violet only heard remarks specially addressed to herself, and general conversation was impossible, and looked at the picture in her memory of the stripling—kind and sweet-natured always, but unfinished, unfurnished, often awkward—whom Violet had thrown over and the big fine looking man before her, who, with easy

self-possession and that habitual charming courtesy which is the outward expression of a good heart, was smiling into Violet's face.

How glad he seemed to see this Violet who had played him false—who was nothing to him any more but a part of the dear days when, as it appeared to him now, they had all been children together! The small blue eyes wont to disappear almost in the puckers of his jolly, florid face, when he laughed, were leaning with all their weight of kindness and goodwill upon the lady before him. That old jealousy of the Violet she had despised stirred uneasily in Betty's heart as she looked. She crossed the room and stood at his side.

Violet looked up at her with her wistful, affectionate gaze:

"Has she not become wonderful, this little Betty we used to know?" she asked.

And almost reluctantly, it seemed, the curate turned to the girl beside him, and there was that in the gaze of the blue eyes as they met hers that made Betty's heart thump for a moment or so within her breast.

The evenings were the rector's easiest and pleasantest times. The sedative he took would begin to affect him agreeably by then, the extreme depression was lightened, the nerves became tranquilized, something of the enjoyment of innumerable evenings of happier days would be his as he smoked the half-pipe which was all he could manage now, and listened to William Carlyon's desultory talk. But the visit of the deaf and emotional Violet had upset the invalid, and the evening of the day she appeared was less pleasant than usual, and the rector the earlier inclined for bed.

When the curate had helped the poor man upstairs on his arm, Caroline following close behind, watchful of every weary, shuffling step, Bill Carlyon came down again and made for the schoolroom door.

Arrived there, he paused for a minute with his hand on the lock. Silence within: the children gone to bed; Betty alone. The days were past when he went carelessly into that presence, or even with an unmixed gladness. To talk to Betty in the old vein now had become something of an effort to him. Once or twice he had felt unequal to that effort, and had gone his way without seeking her. He was undecided if to do so now, letting his prudence and his heart's desire argue the matter out as he stood upon the mat.

But she had known his step as he had crossed the hall, his touch upon the door.

"That you, Bill? I want you. Come in," she ordered, settling the question for him in her peremptory way.

"What were you doing out there, fidgeting with the door-handle?" she demanded suspiciously. "I've been waiting for you here for ages—and there you stood making up your mind if to come in or to escape from me as you did the other night! I haven't forgiven you for it. Now! I am dying to know what you think of her?"

"Of whom?" the curate asked. He joined her on the hearth-rug, and stood beside her there.

"Of the old love—the potent love—the love that was lost! 'Tis the hopeless are the faithful, eh, Bill? I suppose you were shedding dreadfully briny *inside* tears while you talked to her?"

"So long as none escaped over my manly cheek to vex her—"

"I did not see one. You have not told me what you thought."

"I thought her a very sweet and tired-looking lady."

"Conversation with her was always difficult, wasn't it? It's impossible now."

"Oh, no; not that."

"She told me her child was dead and I said it was funny. After I had repeated it once or twice, it seemed to be such an inappropriate thing to say."

"It was hardly so judicious and well thought out as one could wish."

"Oh, how sick to death I expect he is of her!"

"Good gracious, my dear child! A man wouldn't get sick of his wife because such a misfortune had befallen her! He would care for her all the more—"

"You might, perhaps. Ted Harringay wouldn't. (And come down out of the pulpit, Bill. I won't have you there when you talk to me). Since seeing her I seem to remember all about her husband. If she had a dozen ears instead of only half a one, he would be sick of her all the same. I know exactly how she gets on his nerves and irritates him. I want to see him again, Bill."

"We'll get him over," the curate said.

"Yes. Fetch me down the moon at the same time, will you please?" Betty laughed. She laughed, but she looked in Carlyon's face with much kindness, and then she sighed, and turning, she leaned her head on the tall mantelpiece, and looked in the fire.

That mantelpiece had received several coats of varnish since Caroline's reign had begun, but it was still an eyesore to that exemplary housewife, having been carved, and chipped, and cut by the penknives of the little Jervoises from their earliest days. In

the centre was a hole where Betty remembered an iron hook from which had been wont to dangle the apple Ian had loved to roast, sitting to watch it smoke, and spit, and burn, in her little green chair before the fire. On each side, at intervals from very near the fender, the children's names and initials had been carved, and various crude representations of the pets which had, each for its period, reigned in their hearts. The cross beam at the top was ornamented with a more ambitious effort, which had occupied Betty for the greater part of two wet afternoons. The work was entitled "We Four," and represented the rectory children, in acute profile, filing down a straight line in the direction of a primitive dwelling-place, boasting one window, some graduated lines beneath it indicating steps, a large chimney, and no door.

Since Betty's return, to the dismay of the younger family of Jervoises, she had carefully picked out the varnish from this work of art, and also from a carving of Paulie she had made by request on a day when she and Ian had been friends.

But she was not thinking of these early specimens of genius now: "There is one advantage in having to deal with a deaf person, there can be no secrets," she said. "I learned one of yours to-day, Bill, through the agency of Violet's deafness. And I would rather have learned it from you."

The curate looked down at her bent head with a little uneasiness.

"It is that at my father's death you will be here—and Caroline and the children with you. I heard Caroline shouting the fact triumphantly in Violet's ear."

"I have always known I was to have the next presentation," he said. "You aren't sorry, Betty? You would rather have me in the old place than a stranger?"

But Betty was silent.

"You know," he said bringing out the words with difficulty, "that you—that I—" and there his voice miserably failing him, he stopped.

"You mean that while you have a roof above you—that kind of thing? I know. No thank you, Bill. When once my father is dead I don't breathe the same air with Caroline. You are welcome to her and her children! As for me it will be good-bye to Blow Weston. It will be quite the finish, Bill."

She pointed to the carving on the mantelpiece. "Look, there we are, 'we four' I charge you to preserve that memorial, to keep it safe from Caroline's improving hand for ever. Look at Peter in the dignity of his first pair of trousers. Observe the exaggerated rotundity of little Ian's calves, and the entire absence of calf in the attenuated Emily. See the pains I took with my own *fac-simile!* I was always anxious to do justice to my own charms. That is Queen Anne's, do you see? I remember Peter giving a fine realistic touch by rubbing in coal-dust above the chimney for smoke. You are there behind the window, Bill, you were always somewhere near at hand for me. You don't appear in the carving, but you loomed large in the artist's imagination, you may be sure. You can picture yourself cudgelling your brain over your precious sermon. You get up to scold us, to send us away, but—how we must have bored you, Bill! But we never knew and—"

Her voice trembled and she stopped.

"Poor little souls!" she began again in a firmer tone, "poor little 'We Four'"— And then quite unexpectedly to herself, the tears which were so rare with her, rained from her eyes, she bent her face down upon the hands that held to the mantel-shelf, and cried there.

"Don't!" said the curate, standing very upright, looking straight before him into space.

"Don't!" he repeated, looking down upon her, his hand timidly hovering about her hair.

"Don't!" he implored in a choking whisper, his arm holding her fast, his lips upon her cheek.

"This is not my little Betty of the old days—this is not what I felt for her. This is my future wife—more than my very life— You understand, darling? You are not angry—or sorry?"

One of his hands lay close to her face on the mantelboard, she moved her head ever so little, and let her lips touch that hand. And when, a second later, she lifted her face, and moved free of his encircling arm, the curate of Blow Weston, if he had known it, had lived through the one perfectly blissful moment of his life.

"All this is absurd, you know, Bill," she was saying presently, looking solemnly across at him from the armchair into which she had retreated—poor Betty who never tasted the triumphs of the successful, who in the moment of the victory for which she had striven was ever stricken with remorse that she had fought at all, with ruefulest pity for the defeated. "There is Caroline, you know. We had forgotten Caroline and the children."

"What are they to me compared to you, do you suppose?" the curate asked, his voice shaken with the joy that he might say it.

"But they are there all the same. We can't raise hopes in people's minds we don't fulfil. I heard her shouting to Violet the joy that it was to her not to have to leave the rectory. She was asking for a contribution to her boot-club. She said it was a consolation to her to know that it was a good work which she could still carry on. She must not be separated from her boot-club, Bill."

"Oh, her boot-club?" said Bill, with natural impatience. "There are other things I should like to talk to you about to-night. Do you know I had made up my mind—almost—never to tell you how diferent everything was—how I felt? I thought you would be so terribly surprised—angry—disgusted. Were you surprised, Betty?"

"Not a bit," said Betty with composure, "I knew exactly how you felt. I wanted you to tell me."

He wondered did she know, had she any remote conception. He would have liked to question, to protest, to proclaim. But he looked at Betty, sitting serious mistress of herself, on the other side of the hearth-rug, calmly proposing the throwing away of her own and his happiness for the benefit of Caroline and the boot-club, and he desisted.

She shook her head at him as she met his eyes. "We must be sensible and give it up, you know," she said.

The folly of this speech did not call for serious treatment. He went to her and sat on the arm of her chair, and, with a hand beneath her chin, turned up her face to him, the rebellious, tantalizing, en-

chanting face, that it seemed to him he had loved with passion since the world began! Her lips trembled into a smile as he looked at them.

"I love people to love me, Bill," she said.

"People? Johnson and one or two others, perhaps —and me?"

"I was never quite sure about Johnson," she said musingly, "and there was no one else."

"And you prefer me to Johnson?"

He took her answer for granted, and pressed her round white cheek against his clerical waistcoat in gratitude, and asked her to tell him that she was happy.

She asked the question of herself with a little surprise. Happy? Was this happiness? She had wanted Bill to love her in this way—Bill, who was the dearest and best in all the world—and he loved her, but—

She pushed him away from her and lifted her head in a sudden disappointment and impatience with herself, with him, with life. "What a selfish beast I should be if I could be happy!" she said, then presently repented and touched the waistcoat with her cheek again. "If there were nothing in the world but you for me and I for you, if I had no memory and no faithfulness, and no natural affection, then I could be happy," she said.

"No one is to know of this," she told him later. "This is our secret remember, Bill. I will not have my father troubled."

"He is fond of me," Bill reminded her. "He would be pleased, Betty."

"She would worry him to death. You know how she can harp persistently on one string. She will

hate the project—she would make my father hate it—she might make me hate it too."

"Betty!"

"She would be thinking of fresh plans for herself and the children instead of my father and his comfort. And—to talk of marriage to a man who is dying! Promise. That is her step—in another minute she will be routing me out. Promise, Bill."

"A kiss for the promise."

"The promise for a kiss."

"I promise—anything!"

But he did not get his reward. He was always a poor hand at a bargain, giving more than was required of him, and getting less than nothing in return.

"I thought that you liked to devote Friday evening to your sermon, Bill," Caroline said, looking from Betty, poker in hand, on her knees, before the fire, to the curate perched on the arm of an empty chair.

"Is this Friday," Bill asked, a little sheepishly. In that blissful clime which he had for a period inhabited, he had forgotten the foolish arbitrary limitations of a poorer world.

"If we had only remembered I might have been helping him to write it!" said Betty brandishing the poker. "It is my opinion I could write a far better sermon than Bill."

Caroline was too tired to smile even if she had approved of the flippant tone. "Have you mended the stockings as I asked you?" she inquired.

Of course Betty had not mended them. Nurse had said it was not necessary, and Bill had wanted her to talk to him and—

But Caroline had turned with dignity from such lame excuses and had gone in offended majesty from the room in search of the stocking basket.

"Bill," said Betty, solemnly regarding the door through which her stepmother had passed. "If I were not in a position to nurse a big healthy grudge against Caroline I should die of emptiness. My hatred of your sister is a great resource. If I should oust her from her home, in place of cherishing the feeling that she has ousted me, my chief occupation in life would be gone.

Mrs. Jervois was looking very fagged, weary, and worn when her brother went in to say good night.

"Why don't you put all that away?" he said gently, pointing to the stocking basket. "You are evidently in want of rest."

"It is so little I ask of Betty," said Caroline, bitterly. "You see how she refuses to help me even in such matters as these! and you encourage her, Bill. For her own sake, dear, I wish you would sometimes say a word of reproof."

"You have never understood Betty," Bill said, lifting up his head. "You have never looked below the surface of her. If you did you would find," he was on the point of saying, "how adorable she is," but out of consideration for Caroline's feelings, he substituted a less disturbing phrase, "—you would find her one of the faithfullest, truest-hearted women in the world."

"With all my soul I pity the man who marries her," said Caroline. She flushed as she said it, and for such a good creature, there was a decided touch of acrimony in her tone.

CHAPTER V.

"WHERE ARE THE SPRINGS OF LONG AGO?"

THE spring was a fortnight nearer, but it seemed, as March approached, that skies had grown greyer, winds more unkind.

Betty took her stepbrothers along the highroad that led to Edmundsbury for their morning's airing. It was an unlovely, uninteresting scene, but, thanks to the corners of the hedges and the scarcity of the trees, the walking here was better than in the muddy lanes, or the grey rain-laden fields where were Betty's favorite haunts, and Caroline wisely insisted on her offspring promenading there.

"Oh, what a winter!" Betty sighed impatiently as they trudged along. "Come along, Carly. If we crawl like this we shall sink in the mud and never be heard of again. Oh, what an unending winter! I can't even remember when the sun shone last. There used not to be such dark miserable *ages* of days when I was young, children."

"What were the days like then?" Gussy demanded. He had an insatiable love of asking questions and was always the one to keep by Betty's side, while his little brothers, wrapped in their little great-coats, wool-comforters, muffettees and gaiters of their mother's manufacture, dragged dejectedly in the rear.

"Oh, there was sunshine and flowers; and the birds sang always—always!"

"Do you wish they'd make haste and come again?" the youth inquired.

"They won't come again—ever."

"I fink so," said Gussy, nodding his head with superior wisdom. "'Cause my mamma told me when the flowers came again my papa would be dead. I don't think they'll be long now."

He was quite cheerful, even hopeful on the subject. His papa was a person very little known to him and he had never hungered for a closer acquaintance.

"Were you a nice little girl?" he inquired, wishing to pursue the subject of Betty's experiences.

"Yes, very nice."

"I don't fink you were," he dissented, "'cause you aren't velly nice now. And my mamma says all nice boys and girls keeps nice always."

"Your mamma is not, unfortunately for her, in a position to give an opinion," said Betty oracularly. "Your mamma never was a child."

The assertion did not appear so wild a one to Gussy's limited understanding. It required a greater effort of imagination to conceive of Caroline in the stage of naughtiness, helplessness, ignorance, than to picture her born full-grown with serious, worn features, fully clothed in omniscience and indisputable power.

"I wished I'd been a born a grown-up," was all he said, and lost himself for a brief time in contemplation of the joys of an existence where unlimited supplies of sweeties from the village shop—temptations to whose seductions he had only given way since Betty's arrival on the scene—should be his, together with an uninterrupted festival of lying before the nursery fire, broken by no task of work, or promenade, or bath, or

prayer-making, or church-going. "I wish I hadn't been born a child neiver, Betty," he repeated, pulling at her skirt to recall attention.

"You weren't," said Betty promptly, "none of you were. There isn't one of you who knows how to be a child. Now," stopping and jerking him by the shoulder, "what are you doing, little wretch?"

"There's a great black beetle, Betty," the child whimpered. "I am going to crack him. Oh, let me crack him quick, Betty. He's coming for me—he's coming for me!"

Betty stooped and picked up the bettle slowly traveling adown the road, examined him with interest as he lay on her own palm, then seized the little stepbrother's hand, protected in its brown woollen glove. The child struggled, giving a fierce yell of extremest terror: "Hold out your paw!" she commanded.

She held it extended in the grip of her own strong hand and laid the beetle in the little shrinking palm: "Now, carry him safely out of harm's way, to the side of the road."

But Gussy, with one look at the terrible blackmailed monster beginning to march toward the shelter of a little shirt wristband, uttered shriek upon shriek of terror; the hand was held relentlessly in Betty's own but the legs gave way.

Up came the little brothers, mild interest shining in the prominent dull eyes, so like Mr. Jervois's own, their little sharp noses and large thin ears tipped pink and blue with the cold. "He's getting up your sleeve, Gussy," Edric cried with a shuddering glee, hopping in the mud before his agonized brother. Carlyon, the eldest hope of the second family, endeavored with a

twig applied to the back-most legs of him to hurry the retreat of the beetle into Gussy's coat sleeve. A positive howl of terror from the victim was the result.

"Do you see this man coming on horseback?" Betty inquired. "If you haven't done as I tell you before he comes I will ask him to get down and you shall ride his horse."

"I'll tell my mamma-a-a!" in a shriek from Gussy.

"Oh, my! Gussy on a horse!" in joyful expectation from Carlyon.

"Mamma said he wasn't even to ride Mrs. Butcher's rocking-horse any more because he fell off. I shall tell mamma," in angry expostulation from Edric.

"Now then!" said Betty, the relentless.

A glance at the approaching horseman showed her that it would not be a pleasant thing to put her threat into execution. It was not Mr. Butcher jogging along on his old cob, as she had expected, it was not the curate from exercising Taffy's successor—a successor, by the way, worthy of Taffy in every particular. It was not the kind of equestrian to whom they were accustomed in the neighborhood of Blow Weston, but a stranger on a well-groomed horse. It was advisable that Gussy's choice should be made for him, and quickly. He being in the condition known to nurses as "no legs," Betty dragged him on his little trousers across the road and shook the insect from his palm upon the wayside grass.

She had had her way, but Gussy was covered with mud and shaken with sobs. He looked down at the condition of his garments, and howled with renewed vigor, for Caroline held close investigation on the return from the promenade, and expected nothing less than spotlessness of apparel.

"Here is the horse!" cried Betty. "Little wretch! be quiet!"

But Gussy, who thought that the threat to make him ride the enormous and night-marish animal now approaching, was about to be put in execution, tore himself with a frenzied motion from his sister's grasp, and set himself running in the opposite direction from that in which he had proceeded, the direction in which the horseman also was going. The little brothers with a feeble "whoop" started in pursuit, Betty following, for it seemed probable that one of them would be knocked down. She caught a child in each hand and flung him upon the roadside. She made a grab at Gussy, who evaded her and fell full length beneath the horses' feet.

The rider, having also seen the danger, had fortunately slackened his speed. He pulled his horse up sharply but without any difficulty, as the now speechless but uninjured child was dragged away. He leaned forward with a soothing hand on his horse's neck, and looked at the girl and the child with a smile that lifted his lips at the corners.

"I hope no one is hurt?" he said.

And Betty, panting, flushed, disordered, recognized in a moment the narrow, faintly-colored eyes, the clean-shaved, morose, attractive face, the black, straight hair of the man above her.

"We're all right," she assured him curtly, "only a little muddy."

She could not say more for a minute, for she had been frightened for the child's safety; she was not such a good runner as in these short-petticoated days when she had seen this man last; and her breath had failed her. She looked down at the miserable urchin

in her hands. His face, even, was muddy now, a grated place was on his forehead, red among the other stains, and through a jagged hole in the comfortable wool stockings, a grated knee was peeping.

"It was all about a beetle," Betty explained, still pantingly, a hand upon her chest. "He wished to jump on a beetle. Boys who jump on beetles have got to be punished."

"She said I should ride your horse—she said he would gallop away wiv me," Gussy cried, his power of speech returning amid choking sobs.

"Betty teased him. She's always teasing. I shall tell mamma you teased poor Gussy," threatened Edric from the roadside.

Betty laughed. "We had better go home to your mamma," she said. Then once more she looked at the face above her. "My name is Betty Jervois," she said. "Perhaps you are going on to the rectory. You are Violet's husband—Mr. Harringay, I know."

"I knew you at once, of course," Harringay said as they shook hands, "I did not expect that you would remember me."

"I don't forget easily," said Betty, her eyes upon him, noting the line here, the line there time had graved upon his face since she had seen it last. "And Bill—Mr. Carlyon—told me he had met you and that you were coming to Blow Weston."

"Carlyon asked me to come," he said. He expressed no pleasure in availing himself of Carlyon's request as he had certainly shown no eagerness to do so; and Betty remembered how, of old, he had always omitted the things that other people said as a matter of course.

The pedestrian contingent had turned, waiking on

by the side of the horseman: "Oh, my, Gussy! Look at your poor knee," one of the children cried, and Gussy's redoubled cries rent the air. He grasped the wounded member in one hand and advanced in stooping position, with a limping gait which considerably impeded progress.

"You had better ride on and leave us to our fate," Betty suggested, but Harringay reined in his chafing horse and kept alongside.

"My knee, oh, my po'r, dear, hurted knee! I fink I shall die—yes, I fink I shall," sobbed the despairing Gussy.

Betty flung back her cloak over her shoulders and, stooping, took the child in her arms.

"He is far too heavy for you," objected Harringay.

She shook her head.

"Too muddy, then."

"A little mud more or less," said Betty with grand indifference. She smiled, not unkindly, upon the miserable object in her arms. "Baby!" she said, "If you'd only been born a child instead of the queer little nondescript you are, how you would have revelled in your present condition of dirt! Did you ever see a boy so unawake to his advantages?" she asked of Harringay.

But Harringay's eyes overlooked the form of the luckless Gussy as if he did not exist. That cold glance of his passing her by had wounded little Betty many a time. It did not pass her now. It rested on her as she stepped along at his side, her burden in her arms, noting the splendid pose of her figure, built for strength as well as grace, the rich color of her hair, the contour of her face.

The man had an artist's eye and these things natur-

ally attracted it. He would like to sketch her carrying the child, he thought. He rode on composing his picture in his mind, while Betty made attempts at conversation, he obviously paying small attention.

"I think I made a picture of you once," he suddenly remembered with that intent look at her from tender, heavy brows which used to be for Cousin Violet, never for child Betty.

"You did. A quaint imp of a child, all eyes and hair. No one considers it flattering."

"I dare say. I have no special desire to flatter people when I paint them. I paint them as they seem to me—not as their vanity or their uneducated taste makes them desire to appear. I should like to have that picture again."

"You won't," said Betty. "It is one of my proudest possessions." She stopped to shift Gussy in her arms, his weight was beginning to tell on her.

"Put him up in front of me," Harringay suggested, reining in. "Come up here, boy."

Gussy received the invitation with howls of terror, clinging closer to his sister.

"Fling him in the ditch," Harringay's expression seemed to counsel, but Betty, laughing, shook her head and walked on.

"In these days," she said, "if you had drawn me like a nigger and had said it was like me I should have believed you and fought everyone who dared to express a contrary opinion."

"I wonder why."

"Why?" Betty smiled at him, and it was extraordinary how bright her smile could be at times. She had often, in the intervening years, told an imaginary deeply touched Harringay of that early worship

of hers. It had been so real, so deep, so true a thing! The waste of it all was so pitiful! It would be something, at least, that he should know. The time and the opportunity had come at last; but her breathing was troubled, thanks to overexertion on Gussy's account, the children were listening, gazing, with upturned sharp little noses and red-pricked ears; and Betty contrived to put all she had to say in her smile.

"You used to draw," he said, having probably cudgelled his brain for some distinct recollection of her.

"I used to think I did," corrected Betty, "I'm trying to learn to do so now. It was an ambition that lay very near my heart even in babyhood. You once said something I had drawn was clever. You little thought what an important speech it was. It was the beginning of—everything."

"And what was 'everything?'" Harringay asked.

But Betty smiled that radiant smile straight ahead of her now, as she walked on. She would tell him the history of that childish devotion on another occasion.

"And so you are studying art? I don't know if I could be of service to you in any way," Harringay said slowly, brooding on the thought. "I've never done a thing to speak of, myself, but I've known a good many of the men who have. If I could help you—"

"Here's Uncle Bill!" interrupted Carly.

"Hi! Uncle Bill!" cried a chorus of little voices.

And Bill, coming down a cottage garden to the gate, found himself suddenly in the midst of the friendly group. He took Gussy out of Betty's arm, the small boy beginning to whimper again over the necessity of narrating his wrongs afresh.

"Betty teased me, Uncle Bill," he sobbed, "I hate Betty. She put ve beetle up my sleeve, and frowed me at the horse."

"Betty dragged Gussy in the road, Uncle Bill," Carly explained. "Gussy's spoilt his new trousers. Betty made him."

"I shall tell mamma what Betty did," Edric protested spitefully.

"Betty's so wicked, Uncle Bill!" Betty herself said gaily. She was in excellent spirits, somehow, in spite of the untoward events of the morning, exhilarated rather than not, by the ill-opinion of the poor little half-brothers. "Mr. Harringay knew me at once after all these years, Uncle Bill," she added.

Harringay was going on by appointment to lunch at Queen Anne's Cottage. When Carlyon had deposited Gussy and his dilapidations at the rectory gate, the two men went on to the curate's cottage together.

"Be at home this afternoon. We are coming up," Carlyon said to Betty as they parted.

It was with no lightening of his countenance that Harringay made reacquaintance with the places and the faces he had known familiarly ten years ago. As the landmarks of the village rose before his view, no joyful words of recognition escaped his lips. He nodded gravely to the salutations of the long-memoried country folk, who easily recognize a casual visitor of twenty years ago.

If that love affair which he had interrupted, had been allowed to run to its legitimate conclusion, if Violet had been reigning at Queen Anne's, the mother of the curate's children, with what a melancholy

pleasure might he not have visited the scene of that disappointed early passion of his own! Beneath that orchard tree he had first seen Violet standing, bare-headed, "between the blossom and the grass." What a child she had looked, how innocently, shyly interested had been the blue eyes upraised to his. It was by this meadow-gate he had watched for her coming, how many a time! the picturesque urchins who were her charges around her. In this room he had lain and thought of her, wilfully tempting his imagination with what was forbidden. Sitting in that chair, he had first seen the look in her face which had never failed to appear there since when he had cared to call it forth.

With what a pleasurable pain in his heart would he have recalled it all!

But now—now that he had had the thing he longed for, the romance was somehow ended. Such as it was, indeed, it had been ended from the first moment that he had known he could have his own way. He had willed that Violet should adore him, and he found that to be adored by her bored him to death. His had been the error to strive to make of a passing guest, who partly pleased, the permanent inmate of his heart. Tight-lipped and dull of eye, he looked about him. Even in this renewal of old friendship there was humiliation, a constant reminder of the fact that he had played the ignoble part. He had a sense not agreeable to his self-conceit of having been fooled, for his own part, too. For he had thought that he had wrought an irreparable injury, murdered a friendship, —and here was Bill not a penny the worse, able not only to forgive but to forget!

Several times finding the visitor silent on the sub-

ject, the curate introduced Mrs. Harringay's name. Presently the husband himself mentioned it: "You know that she has become deaf?" he said.

"It is a great misfortune," the old lover said. "Of course you have taken special advice?"

"There is nothing to be done. It is inherited. She will probably become stone deaf before she dies. She is extremely sensitive on the point and will have none of the appliances which might alleviate. She is not clever at lip reading. There is a heavy future before her, I fear. I have thought she would be happier at Edmundsbury, near her own people."

"You are going to settle down at last?" the curate asked.

"I don't very easily settle down," Harringay had evasively replied.

Then he began to speak of Betty Jervois!

"My wife reminds me I predicted the child would be a beauty. And she is," he said. "Oh, not perhaps in the vulgar acceptance of the word—the classical type in an English woman is abomination to me. There is something strange and unfamiliar in her style that would not appeal to every taste. But she has a form and coloring that an artist must worship. I know a dozen men who'd give their ears to paint her. I shouldn't do her justice or I'd have a try. No woman cares to sit to me. They say I make them so ugly. I paint them as I see them and they often are precious ugly—even the best looking of them, to my thinking. I wonder if she'd let me try?"

"You can but ask her," Bill said.

He wasn't very keen on the subject himself, being too unenlightened to admire Harringay's female

heads: "They may be clever but I'd rather have something pleasanter to look upon—and with just a suspicion of likeness to the original," he thought, remembering the unfinished head of the child Betty with its halo of impossible hair.

"There's an uncommon ugly likeness of her up in Peter's room in town. Perhaps she'd think that was enough for one artist," said Bill with a laugh.

But that was a subject on which the artist was not at all touchy. No criticism of Bill's could possibly affect Ted Harringay. He took up a book that lay on a chair beside him, and on the fly-leaf, by means of a few strokes, he produced a vigorous sketch of the girl who had walked beside his horse that morning carrying the child.

Bill was astonished: "I say! That's fine," he said. "Perhaps if you confined yourself to black and white, you'd do, Harringay. It's when you get to the paint box!"—

"I should not paint her so," said Harringay, considering the sketch. "She should tramp along by the side of a caravan, her face to the sunset, carrying her child. Head bare, feet and ankles bare—I'd wager my soul she has a beautiful foot and ankle"—

"The color of the sunset faithfully reproduced in her hair, poor girl!" the curate interrupted, getting up hastily. "We know your methods too well, Harringay. Come—let us go across to pay our respects to the poor rector."

CHAPTER VI.

VIOLET'S HUSBAND.

THE visit of Violet's husband created a welcome diversion at the rectory. There were times when the sick man showed an irritable weariness of all about him, even of Caroline, and her unfailing, dutiful devotion, even of William Carlyon and his sympathetic silences. The enjoyment of Betty's society was attended with many drawbacks. He knew that his wife was jealous of the younger woman's ministrations. It was better to forego them than to "create a friction" as he put it to himself. Longing for some distraction in these monotonous days the rector turned eagerly to the newcomer for whom he had had a liking in the old time. He parted from Harringay with evident reluctance and begged of him to come again.

Harringay, touched by the man's condition, by the kindly remembrance kept of himself, exerted himself, in a manner, rare with him who was generally indifferent to the impression he produced, to please.

"We have had a pleasant afternoon. I have enjoyed it, Caroline. We will get Harringay to come over again, my dear, not Violet. Ten minutes of her in this shattered state would destroy me. Keep Violet away from me, I implore you."

Caroline foresaw difficulties in the way of inviting the man to the house without his wife, especially as the wife was a near relative. Betty came to the rescue.

"Bill can get him over whenever you like, father," she said. "Mr. Harringay won't want to bring Violet, and I'm sure he'll like to come if you wish for him."

It is to be supposed Betty was right and he liked it, for he came promptly enough at a word of invitation, and he came and came again. As the weeks went on the figure of Edward Harringay became familiar as of old to the inhabitants of Blow Weston, riding his handsome horse along the Edmundsbury high road on his way to St. Anne's strolling across meadow and through kitchen garden from the curate's house to the rector's.

Occasionally Violet drove over in lonely state.

"You would have to bind Ted with chains to get him to sit in my carriage," she said. "He much prefers riding—and riding does him far more good."

She was always making excuse for the absence of her husband from her side; her tongue from much use had grown glib in the art.

But Violet was not allowed to see the invalid, and her visits, she gathered, were disturbing to the régime of the house, making calls upon the time of those who could not be spared from apportioned duties in the sick room or other-where; and so her visits to her uncle's house became less and less frequent.

The rector's always feeble interest in parish matters had ceased altogether with his illness. It was perhaps impossible for Caroline and Bill Carlyon, whose hearts were in such work, thoroughly to comprehend this. It was with the local births, deaths and illnesses, with the doings of the various Boards of which he had been a member, of the school-meetings of which he had been chairman, that they talked to

him, endeavoring to divert his mind. The poor man had grown impatient of it all; it was wearisome, painful.

It was Harringay who divined this, who knew by instinct the themes to select and those to let alone. He saw when the man was too faint and tired to take his part in conversation, when he preferred to sit silent and hear others talk. It was Harringay who discovered an inexhaustible well of interest for her father in Betty's tales of her life with Peter in Wilmington Terrace, in her account of her art school experiences.

Talk on such subjects had been impossible to Betty with Caroline, coldly critical, sitting by, shocked at this, primly alarmed at that, condemning with her narrow comprehension each incident of Betty's "large hours." But with Harringay for intelligent listener a hundred feeble-witted carping Carolines would not have marred Betty's spirited descriptions. Life had not been always gay or successful in the years in the German school, in the years in Wilmington Terrace; but Betty knew how not to make the recital dull. Only what was comic or interesting, or picturesque, nothing of what was sordid or sad of the seamy side of existence in her continental life or her life up the seventy-two stairs, did her auditors learn.

It was a little difficult to make the rector understand that his daughter was not the crown and glory of the Walker school. And when Betty's native honesty forced her to undeceive him on the point, he suggested to Mr. Harringay that justice should be done the girl in this particular, and called upon him to help in putting matters right.

"You know this professor of hers, you say?" he

observed when Betty was out of the room, "he *ought* to be able to discover talent when he sees it—but if he can't, it must be pointed out to him. I should like him to be put right about my daughter when she goes back."

Then he turned from that subject too, with a sigh. When she went back! Another of the things which would take place when he was dead. How narrow had become the range of subjects on which he could reflect without pain. His own death stood to block the avenue of every line of thought.

On days, becoming ever more frequent, when the invalid was unfit to bear the fatigue even of Harringay's society for long at a time, the man would look into the schoolroom upon the small Jervoises immersed in those daily tasks which it was Betty's hated duty to supervise. He found them generally in a state of feeble rebellion, whining and snapping at their half-sister, a store of complaints laid up against her to repeat to their mamma at lunch or tea-time. Frequently, one of the small boys would be discovered holding himself, by virtue of bribe or threat, in position for Betty to draw. To be converted into a model for Betty's sketchbook was one of the greatest penalties she could inflict on a delinquent—she had recourse to it frequently, the swift and ready corporal punishment she would have accorded, having been vetoed by mamma.

If he were in the mood Harringay would criticise the sketch, oftener he would suggest that Betty stroll through the open window with him to enjoy a mouthful of the fresh air while the little brothers completed their tasks as best they could, alone.

This was a distraction which commended itself all

round. No tales were told of Betty's defection. The tasks were never completed, but Betty took no notice.

She was so busy in thinking of other things when she came back that she did not ask if sums were done, or exercises written. They might say their spelling-column, their pence-table, their page of English history, as they pleased, for Betty never listened.

Once or twice Uncle Bill, who knew the lesson hours, and had been peremptorily ordered by Caroline never to interrupt them, walking past the window for the pleasure of seeing Betty at her post in the schoolroom, had found that post vacant. He was glad to know that she was in the sunshine and fresh air, instead of boxed up with the whimpering little nephews. She could never resist an open window, he would say to himself with a smile, how often he had known her to play truant! Nature animate and inanimate, was always issuing invitations to Betty Jervois to come out to play.

Once, turning away from the window, he had heard his name called in two voices, and had discovered Betty and Harringay sitting under the cedar on the lawn:

"Mr. Harringay is waiting to go in to father. Don't tell that I escaped to talk to him," Betty said. "Look!"

She held out her sketchbook to Carlyon wherein was a freshly executed, cruel caricature of the curate's favorite nephew, weeping in a corner.

"It's really good enough for *Punch*," Bill said. It was the familiar criticism he made on all Betty's drawings.

He turned over a leaf: "This is good—very good! I should have known this anywhere, Betty," he said.

"If I'd seen only that hand hanging over the side of the chair, 'That's Harringay's hand,' I should have said."

Betty wrinkled her forehead, looking at the sketch over the curate's shoulder: "It isn't very good, you stupid Bill," she said. "It was done from memory, I can never draw from memory."

"That me?" Harringay asked, and held out his hand for the book. He only glanced at the picture. "I'd no idea I was such a morose-looking beggar," he said. But he looked rather closely at Betty, standing up unconscious and smiling at the curate's side. Perhaps he was the only one of the three who recognized what a flattering thing this careful portrait "done from memory" was.

On another occasion when he saw her chair at the head of the schoolroom table empty, and learned that Mr. Harringay had taken her away from quite the commencement of lessons, Carlyon searched the garden, even the orchard and plantations for Betty and her companion—in vain.

She had taken him to Sally Nubbs' cottage she explained on her return, to see the old world chimney-corner with the pot hanging on the hook over the fire on the hearth. Mr. Harringay had said the old woman in her wooden armchair, with her snowy, crinkled hair tucked away under the old black bonnet, would make a capital study, and the two had sketched her there and then. According to Mrs. Nubbs Betty's had been the more satisfactory portrait of the two, for she had recognized herself at once and was specially enraptured with the faithful picture of the chair. Whereas she had been both hurt and angry at the scant lines with which Harringay had produced her;

and she had vowed 'twas a shame to say such an ugly old witch could represent her at all.

"All the same," said Betty generously, and half shutting her eyes as though describing what she saw at arm's length before her, "the way he had indicated that quick, furtive glance above her spectacles of the hateful old woman, the manner in which the knotted, stiff hand lay along the arm of the chair, was masterly. It is an education for me to see him draw. It is only when I look at his things I fully realize what an incompetent I am."

If there were really advantage to the girl in this companionship, Carlyon was the last to deprive her of it; but he was not a man to be careless even in little things where the woman he loved was concerned. He judged her very tenderly for the desire to escape from a melancholy house and an irksome occupation, but he knew that she was laying herself open to blame from more than Caroline by shirking her duty; and he thought to himself that Harringay must be told not to tempt her forth.

"We see a good bit of Violet's husband, you and I, Betty," he said to her, "I don't like not to be fair and above-board with him in every way. I think I shall tell him that we are going one day to be married."

He was astonished at the force of her objection to this suggestion. Her colorless cheeks grew swiftly crimson and she looked at him with an angry threat in her eyes.

"If you tell him, that day will never come," she said.

When she saw his hurt and startled look, she repented of the vigor she had displayed: "We can't keep it from this person and tell to that," she said in

a milder tone. "No secret was ever kept so; and for my father's sake, while he lives, I will have it a secret. Why do you want to make difficulties? Supposing all the world knew we should be and do just the same."

"You might," Bill acknowledged, "I'm a good bit uplifted by the fact that you belong to me. I should like to strut a little."

"That is not your rôle at all, silly boy!" she told him. "I won't have you making yourself ridiculous. You understand?"

He said that he understood her will in the matter, but he did not promise submission. He was not, indeed, at all likely to sign away his right of judgment even for Betty, and he decided not only to take Harringay into his confidence, but to spread the news far and wide as soon as he saw necessity for so doing. This resolve, however, he wisely kept to himself for the present.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CEDAR STAR.

THERE came an evening in the history of the rector's dying illness—an evening following a day of oppressive heat—when the invalid, with a rug about his knees, his shrunken, stooping shoulders wrapped in Caroline's fur cloak, sat in his library, drinking in the scents, growing stronger and more ravishing as daylight died floating in to him through the open window.

It was a Friday evening, the great effort to which the hours of the day were consecrated, being happily achieved, Carlyon would come across in the sweet twilight to get a few minutes' talk with Betty through an open window, or a turn with her in the cool of the silent garden, beneath the dark blue sky.

Harringay, waiting till the heat of the day should be past, had ridden over in that pleasant hour. He sat by the sick man's side, while Caroline, taking advantage of his presence there, went upstairs to hear the children's prayers, while Betty, looking white and languid from heat and confinement, had escaped with a book out of doors.

But the light grew too dim to read and Betty was too listless to go far away. She walked up and down the path that ran across the bottom of the garden, and gathered a rose or two from the standards planted there to put in the glass on her father's table. Coming slowly back she seated herself sideways upon the low window-sill of the library, and leaning her head back against the wall, looked up to the sky—pearly tinted,

with here and there a tender flush of rose, pale flame of orange, delicate amethyst cloud, a reminiscence of the gorgeous sunset of an hour agone.

Harringay, sitting in sight of the figure framed by the foliage of the creeper growing thickly round the window, of the perfectly outlined, pallid face of the heavily massed hair, talked on in his always gentle voice—a voice capable of tenderest cadences—to the swaddled figure in the chair. The rector listened with closed eyes, making no other response than a sigh. Betty, her face turned upward, but with drooping lids, listened to the voice, not following what it said. She was weary with the distasteful duties of the long day, weary of the sadness of that death in life which was her familiar contemplation, content to sit inert with suspended consciousness and the music of a voice in her ears.

When it ceased, Harringay came softly across the room and stood beside her. There was no embarrassment for her in the knowledge that he was near her and that there was silence. She did not stir so much as a finger of the hands clasped loosely on her knees, the roses in her lap were not disturbed, nor the position of her upturned face altered, but she lifted her heavy lids, and the star above the cedar-tree on the lawn shone into her eyes.

After a long silence it was of this star she began to speak.

"When we were little," she said, "we divided between us those of the heavenly bodies which met with our approval. I took the sun, I remember—a characteristically modest appropriation. To Emily, next in order of importance, the moon was allotted. She was made responsible for the erratic behavior of her

planet in hiding behind clouds; she was looked on as a delinquent when it was on the wane, and on an entirely moonless night, Ian and I slated her roundly, thinking he would make such a nice playfellow for Paul, the kitten. Ian made choice of the Great Bear. But I, discovering that several stars went to the formation of that constellation, sternly restricted her to a single star. Upon which she selected that silver star above the cedar. I don't even now know it by any other name. I don't wish to. On summer evenings like this, Ian could see it from her little bed, shining above the black branches. There it is, you see—Ian's star."

He stood above her, leaning upon the hand placed on the window-frame over her head. There was no one to notice what direction his eyes took, or to surprise the expression on his face; and he did not confine himself to the contemplation of the Cedar Star.

"Ian's kingdom!" she went on softly, as if talking to herself. "I wish it were possible to put from the mind all one tries to believe, and can't believe, and doesn't want to believe, and to claim a heaven of one's own in a star one knows and loves, and can see, night after night, with one's bodily eyes! I never want to be an angel, Mr. Harringay, do you? I would rather be a child again, haughty, tyrannical, irresponsible and happy, playing with the other children in the rectory garden. I like to please myself by making believe that when the finish comes, that is the heaven I shall find in the Cedar Star. Since you are free of Ian's kingdom, what sort of a heaven will you prefer to find there, I wonder?"

"You don't want me to tell you, really?"

"Yes—really." She turned swiftly and looked up

at him; and her breath came quickly and her voice sank to a whisper because of something new to her in his voice.

"But I may not tell you," he said. He lifted his face which had drooped toward hers, the tempting charming face beneath him, and turned away his gaze from the alluring heaven of her eyes to the placid sky above him.

She looked up at him, still with quick-coming, passionate breathing, not speaking.

"Do you think that I would not tell you if I dared?" he asked, compelled to speech by the eager voiceful silence.

And in those few words he had contrived to tell her; and, without more ado, she understood.

She moved her head back into its old position and looked up once more at the star. Things had altered in the minute since she saw it last. Would it content her now to play for ever in a garden with Ian? Bill had always been there in the background, living, across the meads of asphodel, in the Cedar Star reproduction of Queen Anne's. But now—Harringay too! Harringay—Harringay above all! Betty's heaven was becoming complicated.

After a long silence: "I shall go away," Harringay said suddenly, as if replying sharply to a question which had been asked.

A great darkness fell upon Betty's world and the star was blotted out.

"Why?" she asked him breathlessly, and after a pause, "Aren't you happy here?"

"Happy? As happy as I deserve to be, I dare say. Happiness is for the Cedar Star, Betty. We've got our private hells, some of us, and you at least have

your special heaven. If I get another chance, when I'm done with the muddle I've made of things here, I should like to take it in Ian's kingdom. If not there—nowhere!"

"Why should you go away?" she whispered. "Don't go."

"Need you say that when you know how weak I am? Don't you know that while I say 'I will go,' I am boasting of a strength I don't possess. That the more certainly it is borne in on me, that I should not hesitate for a moment, when duty, honor, everything that decent men hold sacred bid me go at once, without an instant's delay, the more sure it is I, being what I am, shall stay."

"There are times when it is hateful to be strong-minded," Betty said, in her hurried breathless voice. "Duty and honor and the rest of it are only tyrants we set up over ourselves—they can't always have the last word. You shall not go. We could not get on without you in this horrible time. My father would miss you—you must stay."

"Oh, I shall stay," he said. "I know myself well enough for that. There is generally going on within me a struggle between decency—what most people call duty, you know—and inclination, and decency is used to going to the wall."

Across the silence that again fell between them, came a long sigh from the room behind them.

"Father!" said Betty, startled and remorseful, "I had forgotten him."

She went hurriedly into the room, and presently Harringay, looking out upon the night, heard his name called sharply.

"He is dead!" Betty cried, looking with bitter

self-accusation upon the unconscious face. "We forgot him—and he has died."

"He is not dead, he has fainted," Harringay reassured her.

"It was my fault, Caroline—all mine," Betty cried to Mrs. Jervois, entering. "I forgot him—and he fainted. If he never comes to himself again I shall have killed him."

"Did no one give him his drops at eight o'clock?" Caroline asked, severe, with pale, drawn lips.

"I tell you no. I forgot him. Say what you like to me," Betty cried, fiercely remorseful.

"A little attention to duty is worth a great deal of vain regret," Caroline reminded her. Her own hands were shaking as she chafed those cold ones of her husband, but where a mild reproof was needed the good woman had always presence of mind enough to seize the moments' gift.

"Miss Jervois has neglected nothing," Harringay said, with his superior man's sense. "She and I talked in the window for a few minutes because Mr. Jervois was tired. Look he is reviving. I will stop for a little and help him up to bed."

"And it is my opinion," he said to the curate, when that gentleman, his sermons happily off his hands, for one more week, presently appeared, "he will never come down again."

The poor man had fainted again after the upstairs journey and the fatigue of undressing, and the doctor had to be fetched. By the time that he had come and gone it was declared to be too late for Harringay's ride home, so once more as of old he walked across with Carlyon and passed the night beneath the curate's roof.

CHAPTER VIII.

HIS FORTUNE IS THE GREAT PERHAPS.

HARRINGAY was right: that was the last for the poor rector of the library where the greater part of his life had been spent. For a time there was still talk in his presence of his coming down. "In a day or two when he recovered from these horrid faint feelings and would come down—" "Next week—next month—when the weather should not be so warm—and he came down—"

The rector listened, saying nothing, but he knew that he would not come. He did not regret it over much—he felt better and stronger without the daily exertion. They could all be with him still—those he wanted; and the fact that, being in his bedroom, he could now exclude unwelcome visitors was a great relief to him.

They had not always been admitted, but, without offence, they need never be admitted now. He had his wife, and Betty, and Bill Carlyon, and Harringay —Harringay staying on at Queen Anne's, as if the ten years that had passed had been a dream, as if he had no home of his own, and no wife anxiously awaiting him there.

The rector opened his eyes suddenly upon his wife, one day, with that startled look with which he always came back to this world again after brief unconsciousness: "I can hear someone shouting," he said. "It

woke me. That woman—Violet—must be here. Send her away, Caroline—let Betty come to me, and you send her away. Tell her I cannot bear it—that she must not come here."

Caroline went obediently, but Betty, alas, was nowhere to be found.

The shouting came from the schoolroom. It was the children's holding loud converse with Violet; telling her that mamma was upstairs with papa, who was just the same, thank you; that Betty had gone out with Mr. Harringay to see a squirrel—three squirrels sitting together on one bough of the beech-tree in the shrubbery. Betty hadn't let them come—nor Carly, nor Gussy, nor even Edric who had cried, but she had gone—and had stayed away all the morning.

Caroline, with the air of putting a strong pressure on herself to keep down her just displeasure, set herself to start the children on their neglected tasks, asking Violet to be good enough to go to the shrubbery, and fetch back the truant to the scene of her duty.

Mrs. Harringay went slowly through the open window, and slowly bent her steps in the indicated direction. But the steps were few and faltering she took toward that spot, and often she stopped, seeming to listen—to listen for whispering voices when nothing less than the roaring of a bull could have reached her ear. And her face was pale to the lips, and her eyes were wild and full of fear. For quite a long time she stood, irresolute, on the sunlit lawn. The branches of the beech which had held the squirrels were stretched high above the laurels and box-trees among which it grew, but the path among the shrubs was

hidden from her view. Violet turned her back resolutely upon the beech tree, and looked back at the house, square and red-bricked and creeper-covered. It had been the scene of her own happiest hours, the brief romance of her youth had been acted there—she saw it through scalding tears.

"I am the most unhappy woman on God's earth!" she said.

Then, as if suddenly making up her mind to a desperate course, she turned away from the house, and hurried across the garden; letting herself through the orchard gate into the church meadow, she went with swift and nervous feet down the narrow, well-worn path to Queen Anne's.

The curate, as it happened, was returning from his parish rounds. Entering his garden by another gate, he caught sight of Violet and came to meet her.

"Harringay isn't here," he said, thinking that he divined her errand, and having forgotten her deafness, he had to repeat the information two or three times. "You will find him at the rectory with Mr. Jervois. He is nearly always with him now."

Violet shook her head with the saddest possible smile of superior knowledge: "He is at the rectory," she said in her indistinct, whispering voice, "But not with my uncle."

They had been walking toward Carlyon's house but she stopped him now, and stood in front of him, her hand upon his arm, her blue, tear-dimmed eyes, whose appeal he did not at all understand, upon his face.

"I behaved badly to you once," she said, hesitatingly, pressing his arm, "— but it is so long ago, and you have forgiven and forgotten. You would not willingly do me an injury, Mr. Carlyon?"

He shook his head and nodded it, in an eager effort to reassure her.

"Send my husband back to me, then—don't keep him here."

Carlyon looked at her in astonishment: "Poor Mr. Jervois likes to see him," he said slowly, "and Harringay is good-natured enough to humor him. It won't be for long, Mrs. Harringay."

That sorrowfully superior smile of hers, twitching painfully at her lips, grew sorrowfully contemptuous now, "You don't suppose it is for Mr. Jervois he stays!" she said, "Ah, you don't know him so well as I or you would not be so blind."

The curate looked at her in silence, and as he looked the healthy color of his face faded to an ugly grey. He made no other answer than his growing pallor, than the questioning of his eyes. She turned her own eyes sickly from his and her small gloved hand patted his arm nervously several times to emphazise her last words. "Do not keep him here. Send him back to me," she said, and with no other word turned away from him walked swiftly with hanging head to the carriage awaiting her at the rectory gate, and drove away.

Carlyon did not go across to the rectory that evening. He ate his dinner, or rather contemplated it as it was set before him, in solitude; and afterward with restless steps and eyes that kept watch upon the path across the meadow grass, tracked originally by his own feet and the little ones of Betty and her sisters, he paced his garden walks. The fierceness of the anger and the pain which had been in his heart for a few cruel moments had died out—almost. The habit

of his mind, to believe the best of everyone, served him faithfully now. "What we are that only do we see," and Bill Carlyon saw everywhere the loyalty that was in his own breast.

She was jealous—the poor little deaf woman—poor Violet! Her misfortune had thrown her back upon her own imaginings. Even Bill knew that women could be jealous for nothing; and Harringay was not the sort of man to play attentive husband to an exacting wife.

And Betty—had she from her babyhood been false to a trust, or forgotten a promise she had made? How was it possible even such a one as poor Violet had come to believe of Betty so hideous a possibility? So the curate, reasoning himself to calm. And in the same moment lifting a haggard face to the sky and crying to his God to let his life end there at once if such a thing could be true!

Why had he stood silent when Violet had dealt that blow at his heart? Why had he not said at once, "You can believe what you like of your own husband, but you are traducing my promised wife and I command you to be silent." What a dolt he had been to stand there helpless with his palsied tongue!

It was he who had been to blame all through. Secrecy was always wrong. Not for another hour—let Betty scold as she might—would he lend himself to that concealment.

The stars were coming out slowly in the deep blue of the sky when Harringay came at last across the meadow path. The curate, watching by the gate in the soft darkness, found the man he looked for all at once startlingly near at hand; while Harringay, walking with down-bent eyes, knew only of the presence

of his host, when the gate swung open at his approach.

"They were wondering what had become of you, to-night, Carlyon," he said at once. "They expected you across."

"And I expected you back to dinner," the curate reminded him.

"The poor fellow had another of those fainting fits about the time I should have left. Each time I think what a mercy if he never came round. The women are becoming nervous and afraid to be left. They stayed with him all the evening. I have had a lonely time."

"Mr. Jervois did not send for you."

"No. He is getting past all desire but the desire to be let alone. He is past thinking of me."

"I, too, think he is past it," Bill said. "Peter should be here. I will write to him to-morrow. I think he won't ask for you again, Harringay."

Harringay was quick at the reading of tones. He had known in the first moment that Carlyon's was altered.

"In that case, perhaps, I had better be getting back," he said, evenly. "Too many people hanging around would be an embarrassment to them."

"I think so," the curate grimly acquiesced.

"I'll go across in the morning on the chance of saying good-bye to him, poor fellow. It'll be best to clear out before the son comes."

"Very well, Harringay, before you go there is a thing I have to tell you. I have been thinking to-night that it has been—unfriendly—of me, perhaps, not to have told you before. I am going to be married to Betty Jervois."

There was silence for only a thought longer than

that which is usual in friendly converse, and Harringay asked: "Has this been so for long?"

"For long before you came. Since almost as soon as she came back."

There was another scarcely perceptible pause, before Harringay said in his equable voice,

"I congratulate you, Carlyon."

The curate thanked him gently. "Aren't you coming in?" he asked, for the open door was reached and Harringay had drawn back from the light that streamed forth.

"Not for a minute," he said. And so the curate entered alone, leaving the other man standing lonely beneath the stars.

In a quarter of an hour he also came into the study: "It's a glorious night for a ride, Bill. I've told your man to put the saddle on my mare, and I'll get off at once, I think. A gallop under the stars is preferable to one in the blazing sun."

The curate did by no means try to postpone his departure, but he felt severely uncomfortable, for the moment in the less enviable position of the two.

"Can I give any farewell messages at the rectory?" he asked; and Harringay answered as he lit his cigar:

"Oh no. They are too much distressed just now to miss me. I shan't be leaving Edmundsbury for a week, I dare say. At the end of that time—"

He stopped, pulling at the cigar which did not light very easily. He had been about to say that at the end of the week he should go to Paris, but a timely recollection came to him of a former occasion when, on parting with William Carlyon he had made that announcement, and he was silent.

In the minute that followed they heard the mare's

hoofs on the gravel as she was led past the window to the front door.

"Well, I'll say good-bye, Bill," Harringay said.

Their hands touched and fell loosely apart, and Harringay turned to the door. There he paused for a minute, sucking at the refractory cigar, not looking back into the room:

"I thank you for your confidence, you know, although it's a little late, and was a trifle hurried when it came," he said. "You're a very good fellow, Carlyon. Sometimes I have thought you are the best fellow I have ever met. And so I hope you'll get your deserts, and be happy. I'm sure I hope that."

Then he went out.

The curate followed him to the door: "What I have told you to-night is no longer a secret," he said. "Perhaps Mrs. Harringay will be interested to hear it. You are at liberty to tell her."

Harringay did not express gratification at that privilege: "Women generally know these things. I dare say she knows already," he said indifferently.

"She did not know this morning. I regretted—too late—that I did not tell her," Carlyon said, and the other man paused with his foot in the stirrup, and listened to those few words with evident attention.

Then he flung himself into his saddle, and rode away.

It was on the morning after Harringay's departure that the rector opened his eyes, after brief unconsciousness, upon his daughter sitting by his side, and, smiling upon her with a smile whose light Betty never remembered to have seen on his face before, addressed her by the name of her dead mother.

"What makes you so sad, Elizabeth?" he asked, and held out to the girl a feeble hand, which Betty, awed and silent, took in her own. "The children are all well—your little Ian is well, why should you be sad?" he repeated.

He looked at his daughter still for a moment with transfigured face, and in his eyes such light of love as had never been there for her:

"Father," she said brokenly. "Father, dear, you are dreaming."

She coaxed and kissed the wasted hand she held, and her tears fell fast upon it. When she looked up again the light on the dying face had faded, all the rapture was gone from the gaze.

"Did I say anything?" he asked; and, after a pause, "I think I was dreaming of your mother, Betty. You grow like her of late, my dear."

Then he bade her fetch his keys, and he put into her hand a certain one telling her to which drawer in his writing-table it belonged: "The rest are for—anyone. That is for you alone," he said, and she saw the slow tears steal from closed lids upon his cheek. "Rubbish—only rubbish, Betty, but you will know what to do with it, my dear."

All through the day his mind wandered and he was restless unless Betty held his hand in hers. They told him that Peter was coming, and he said at once he was glad, and he hoped that his other children were coming too. Caroline, jealous for her little boys, recalled to his memory that his children had already bidden him good-morning and would certainly come in again to say good-night. He took no sort of heed of this remark, and it was evident to all, that it was of the children of his youth he was thinking.

"Emily is in Germany, dear father," Betty said, "we will send for her at once, if you would like her to come."

It seemed that this speech also fell on deaf ears.

Presently they heard him whisper Ian's name to himself with an indulgent smile, and Caroline, who thought it her duty to dispel all illusions, even those of a deathbed, bent over him:

"Ian is in heaven, dear," she said. "You will know your little Ian in heaven, Eustace."

He opened dull eyes upon her, wondering.

"In heaven? Ian?" he asked, "Oh, no, the children are playing in the garden, and Ian has just now called to me through the window."

A telegram, to hasten his arrival, was sent to Peter, but before he could reach Blow Weston rectory, his father was dead.

CHAPTER IX.

A CONTRADICTION STILL.

Peter Jervois and the curate sought Betty on the day after the funeral and found her listlessly pacing the garden paths.

"I thought Betty would have borne up better," Peter said, looking at the wan face, the dejected gait of his sister, "She must have been thoroughly prepared."

"I suppose such events can never find us prepared," the curate said, and having delivered himself of that trite observation went up to his affianced and took her hand.

"I have been telling Peter of our engagement," he said. "You don't object to its being known now, dear?"

"Object? Oh, I suppose not," Betty said, in the hopeless tone of one whom nothing further can stir to emotion of any kind.

"Yes—but why couldn't you have told me yourself—and at once?" Peter asked, a little aggrieved. "It would have made things a lot more comfortable for me, and jollier all round."

"Would it?" she asked indifferently, "I don't see in what way. I am going back to you at Wilmington Terrace, all the same, Peter. I have lost nearly a year at the Art School which I mean to make up."

"But Peter, for his part, has something to tell you, Betty," the curate interposed.

"Since you are so comfortably fixed up, Betty, I mean to fling up the office and off go to the Congo," Peter explained eagerly.

Then he told how the chance to do this had been given him by a certain Sir Thomas Keyes, a college friend of his father's, who had shown kindness to the brother and sister in the Wilmington Terrace days, and who, in the matter of butterflies, beetles, and centipedes had tastes identical with Peter's own.

"His son and another man are going, and if I like I can go too," Peter said with his eyes shining, "and I do like. I should have stayed on for you if you had wanted me, Betty, but I'm precious glad I can get away."

And "precious glad" he looked as his sister saw.

The flowers that had lain on the rector's coffin, lay sweetly odorous and unfaded still on the yellow soil of his grave; but his father had been little more than a name to Peter for many years, and the gratification of a darling wish is matter for rejoicing though the warning that man hath but a short time to live and is full of sorrow, be still ringing in the ears. The young man, as he walked the garden paths with his sister and the curate, woke up into a lively and intellectual being. What had been locked up in his heart so long —his hatred for his work, his longing to see—not life in its usual sense—but the world and its creations, the bitterness and regret, and secret rebellion of the past, and the joyful anticipation of a future at last within his grasp—these things fell in convincing, forceful language from his lips. His eyes were suffused with light, there was the ring of promising young manhood in his voice. A different being this from the sullen, gloomy-browed young fellow who had gone

doggedly, morning after morning, to hated work at his desk.

As for Betty, she could but be thankful that he rejoiced, but for herself, hopelessness lay heavy upon her soul. Caroline drawing the tight lip of reserve over the stored memories of Betty's neglectfulness, had taken her children once more under her own management. No duties were apportioned to the inconstant Betty any more. No place in the household seemed to be hers. She longed to be away from it; thinking to leave her unrest and discontent and the secret unceasing harassment of thought and confusion of feeling behind her. Peter had seemed her only refuge—and now, Peter had failed her! For Bill Carlyon—Bill to whom, naturally, from babyhood she had turned in any difficulty or sorrow—Bill had become something of a terror to her in these later days of perplexity.

When Peter went indoors to pack his portmanteau for returning, Betty would have followed him but that the curate stopped her.

"Why do you want to run away from me?" he asked. "You used not to run away, Betty."

She pulled herself from the hand he would have laid on her shoulder, and looked at him, frowning, with resentment, almost aversion, in her eyes. "Because I hate to be petted and comforted," she said. "I won't be comforted. I am not a baby any longer. What I have got to bear, I can bear. I wish to be left alone."

He had to forgive the cruelty of the words when they finished with the old childish break-down into sobbing he remembered so well.

"I only want to say this to you," he said. "You are so determined on allowing me none of the privi-

leges which should be mine, and I am too anxious to please you even in this to claim them, that it is possible you might forget: You are first with me in all the world. And it is a world where, you see, Betty, even Peter has to think of himself. I insist on this now—although you ought to know it well—because you seem to think that others—Caroline and her children—can weigh with me against you. When, if you were on one side, the whole universe could not turn the scale on the other. You are the universe as far as I am concerned. Can't you try to understand?"

"I understand, of course," she said. "You are absurdly good to me. I wish you weren't so good and perhaps I should be a little better. And yet I should not—nothing could make any difference now. Bill, you haven't told Mr. Harringay about this thing, have you?"

"Our engagement? Yes. I told him."

Her face grew whiter and her eyes blazed angrily upon him: "You had no right," she said. "You had promised not to do it. You have deceived me."

He looked at the girl with her white hard face and the color of his own changed, and his heart sank heavy as lead.

"The news in no way concerned your cousin Violet's husband, but I told him," he said, "I am going now when I leave you to tell my sister Caroline."

"You can please yourself. I will not live with Caroline when once she is told, remember."

But he would not be deterred by that or any threat, and in less than half-an-hour Caroline was told. What passed between the brother and sister Betty never sought to know, but the interview was a long one, and at its conclusion the curate led his sister into the

schoolroom where Betty sat alone. Then Caroline, with her grave face cold and set, went up to the girl and kissed her with chill lips on the top of her down-bent head.

"I hear you are to be my sister as well as my step-daughter, Betty," she said. "Of course, I wish you every happiness."

To which Betty murmured "Thank you," without lifting her head and in no very responsive tone of voice, and Carlyon thought to himself that his sister was comporting herself much more graciously than his betrothed.

Caroline's eyes, leaving the figure of Betty, wandered drearily enough round the familiar room. The news she had just been told had filled her cup of bitterness to overflowing she thought. For more than ten years had she ruled household and parish with authority. It was a position she was in many ways well-fitted to fill, and for which she naturally believed herself to be fully fitted. And this position she had looked forward to retaining in her brother's house.

That idea was now over. Life—such as she would care to live—was over too. The sphere of usefulness in which she had moved—and Caroline could be very eloquent to herself on the subject of her sphere and her usefulness—was to be hers no longer. Her children must leave to the home in which they had been born, and all for the caprice of a girl. For Betty, whom Caroline, knowing to the bottom and through and through, as crude and narrow natures always do comprehend the ins and outs of those which are subtle and complex, knew to be unloving, idle, hard, yet frivolous, the last woman in the world with whom Mrs. Jervois's brother could find happiness!

So having paid the tribute to Betty which Bill had insisted on, she looked around upon the home of which the girl had robbed her, and tears of grief and anger and mortification gathered in her eyes.

Bill, seeing this, went to her, and put his hand upon her arm. "You know," he said, "you and I are to be friends to the end of the chapter, Caroline. This is not to make any difference between us."

"You think not?" Caroline said, and slightly shook her head. She attempted a smile for her brother; but the tears ran down and then a sob came; and Caroline, pulling out a hasty handkerchief, left the room.

Betty turned eagerly upon the curate. "You must give it up," she said. "I always told you so, and I was right. This shall be the end. You must give it up at once."

"Never," Bill said. And, she sitting in a position where it was impossible to escape him, he put himself beside her, and while he gave her a long list of reasons—bearing a strong family likeness each to each—why that course must be for ever and ever impossible, he felt the opposition to his enfolding arm relax. Presently he knew with a boundless delight that Betty was resting willingly, even with a sort of abandonment of herself against him. Touching her cheek he found it wet with tears and soon she was crying with a wild unrestraint, a painful intensity of emotion, in his arms.

He knew that her heart was overburdened in these days and that she proudly denied herself, when it was possible, the natural relief of tears, and he did not try to check her emotion. Now and again he touched her hair with a gentle hand, or whispered a word of en-

dearment into her ear. It seemed from sheer exhaustion only that she ceased to cry at last and lay quite still.

"You're so good," she whispered to him, then. "So good—and I'm so bad. If you knew how bad, you could not love me any more. Yet do love me a little, Bill—do love me."

And Carlyon in the husky whisper which was all that emotion left him swore that, let what would betide, he would love her with every beat of his heart while life remained to him.

With a sense of gladness and a heart filled with thanksgiving the curate left his betrothed that night.

Betty, the adored woman, was only Betty the naughty child still, passionate, impulsive, tyrannic, tempestuous, yet, to him, how far sweeter than any other child or woman the earth held—to him who knew her, how surely soft and loving, how tractable and sweet! She would not be an easy wife to manage, but he had no fear of her wayward moods, he knew that in the finish she would come humbly enough to his arms, that he should feel her cling to him and entreat of him still to love her. Was there in all the world a woman of such an irresistible charm?

He sat up late, smoking and thinking such foolish lover-thoughts in his study at Queen Anne's, and in the quiet of the night was visited by an inspiration.

Why should Betty, after all, be condemned to live at the rectory for the next six months in a companionship she hated? Why could they not be quickly and quietly married? Why should not Betty come home to Queen Anne's at once! The thought of the girl, whose image always haunted the place, there in the

flesh as his wife was disturbing. He could not sit still and feel the immensity of it beating at heart and brain. He got up and took the lamp in his hand and walked through the house, peering into each empty room to see what it would look like when Betty was there, trying to plan his excited brain what alterations he could make in wall-papers and carpets and curtains which had grown dingy in all these years.

He knew that Blow Weston and Crabberton were to be his. With the seven hundred a year which would come to him with the livings, he would be, for a country parson, rich. The small income he had of his own, he could afford to pay over to Caroline to help in the bringing up of her boys, and nothing need be denied to Betty.

He found it, however, difficult to picture the rooms in more magnificent array; and it was quite possible that Betty, the faithfullest of hearts, might not care to make a change—might prefer all as it had seemed desirable to her child's eyes. And it need not be for long. When time had been given Caroline to make her plans, there would be the rectory for Bill Carlyon and his wife. Only, why need they wait for that—why should not the marriage be at once?

At once! He had come back to the study, now, and he put down the lamp on the table, threw up the window and looked out. Straight before him, beyond the kitchen garden and the tracked walk in the meadow was the rectory; he breathed all sorts of fond and foolish messages to one dear head beneath that roof. His heart was full of happiness, the influences of the solemn night were about him, and he was very devout. Who can say what prayers floated forth upon the darkness, as the curate leaned forward into the

night, looking upward at the starless sky. When he closed the window, a light of almost rapture was upon his florid, pleasant face, but his eyes were full of tears. He went to bed and tossed there, feverishly but blissfully wakeful, till long past the dawning of another day.

It happened that his duties called him to visit sick parishioners in widely differing directions that morning and in the afternoon he had to take a funeral for a friend in an adjoining parish. It was almost five o'clock before he was free to go across to the rectory.

He looked in at the schoolroom window as he passed and was charmed to see his sister sitting there—a prim, pathetic figure in her widow's dress. So much the better chance of his having Betty to himself! She would not be indoors on such a glorious day. He looked for her in all her favorite haunts of garden, orchard, plantation, before he entered the house. The garden was empty and seemed chill to him with the first breath of coming autumn; dining and drawing-rooms deserted. Of course she would not be in the library, Carlyon said, and with a saddening of his face pushed open the door. But if the garden was chill the library was cold and gloomy as the grave where its late master lay. Carlyon pulled to the door gently and moved away with a shamed feeling of relief as though he were escaping from a friend who called him.

Then Betty must be keeping her own room, and if so she must be ill. With a hurried step he walked down the passage to the schoolroom and threw open the door.

"Is not Betty well? Where is Betty?" he asked.

Caroline looked up calmly into his anxious face:

"Did you not know that Betty is gone away? I thought of course she had sent you word."

"Gone? Where?"

"To Edmundsbury. Violet drove over for her this morning. She seemed delighted to get away. Is it possible you did not know?"

CHAPTER X.

THE HARRINGAYS AT HOME.

When Harringay on the night of his sudden departure from Blow Weston had reached home he had found Violet in bed and had not disturbed her. It was not until his wife came down to breakfast next morning that she discovered her husband was in the house with her.

She was a little frightened, to tell the truth, at the sudden response to her desire for his presence: she felt frightened and shamed and guilty. She had not the art of concealing her emotions very successfully, and it was with a flushed face and eyes that avoided his gaze, she went forward and put up her cheek to be kissed.

"I thought I was never to see you again, dear," she said. "Is my uncle better that you have left him, Ted?"

"He is near his end—if that is better," Harringay said and sat down to his breakfast.

"If I had known you were coming—are these what you like, Ted," looking nervously around upon the dishes before him.

He was not one to care greatly for the pleasures of the table at any time; he moved his shoulders, lifted his brows, threw out his hands—these gestures being less trouble to him than to raise his voice to his wife across the table—and proceeded silently with his breakfast and the letters which lay beside his plate.

When he had finished these latter she brought her cup and sat by his side as was always her custom. She talked to him with something more than her natural timidity in her whispering voice, watching the thin, clean shaved lips anxiously for reply.

She told him the little news of household and of town. He learned that her own maid whom she had brought from Paris was disgusted with the dullness of Edmundsbury and had spoken of the impossibility of remaining in such an environment. That the parlor-maid had been giving trouble by her behavior with the young man who was helping in the garden, and that cook, old enough to be the young man's mother, was horribly jealous and disagreeable in consequence. She had been impertinent to Violet, and yesterday, when a couple of the Belton girls had come to lunch, had sent every dish nearly stone cold to table. That gardener was afraid the grapes were spoilt for the year. They had not been sufficiently thinned out at prunning time—which was before gardener himself had arrived on the scene.

"Gardener seems never to be in fault, and yet something he has charge of is always going wrong," Violet said, who took such matters as these seriously to heart.

Harringay heard the history, besides, of the quarrel of the vicar of the parish with his new churchwarden, and was informed that the Irish assistant of Dr. Edgar had been discovered once more in broad daylight, rolling, dead drunk, down the high street.

By the time the budget was exhausted, Harringay had finished his breakfast and had commenced to roll himself a cigarette: "Let me do that for you, dear," she said. But he declined the attention. Her cigarettes were always ineffective he told her.

So she watched him roll the cigarette with his handsome, clever fingers, looking on longingly the while; because to be allowed to wait on him was her greatest pleasure, and often he was good-natured to the extent of letting her spoil tobacco for him in her well-meant efforts to please. He held the cigarette as often between his fingers as his lips, resting, elbow on table, gently coaxing with a disengaged finger the outline of the lip where the moustache should have been. He seemed to be gloomy and full of thought, and Violet, seeing him pre-occupied held her peace.

He turned to her at length, shooting one glance at her from his narrow light eyes before again he directed them upon the silver dish at the end of the table at which he had been blankly staring for so long.

"I came away from Blow Weston because they no longer seemed to want me there," he remarked.

She said, "Indeed!" in a small voice, and with a quick beat of a guilty heart.

"Curious, wasn't it? Not to want me!" he continued. "You always want me, don't you, Vi?"

"You know that I like best to have you with me," she said softly. "It would be very unnatural if I did not want you, Ted."

"I suppose so. The curate—your old friend, you know—as good as turned me out. Not very civil of him, was it?"

"Mr. Carlyon could never have done that! You must have misunderstood him, dear."

He gave a short laugh, stirring a little in his chair. "Dear me, no! He was explicit enough," he said. "And, by the way, you were with him yesterday morning, Violet."

He turned his eyes swiftly upon her at the last

words, and he kept them, steadily attentive, upon her face, although he saw by its expression that his gaze was torture to her just then.

Slowly she dropped her head before him, hanging it like a naughty child whose small sins have been discovered. Her delicately tinted cheeks flushed a painful pink, and the long straight lashes, slowly fell and lay upon them, veiling the telltale eyes. Not a word did she say, but her confession was there for her husband to read all the same.

When he had satisfied himself, he turned away his head with again the short monosyllabic laugh, but his face had grown hard, and a look of angry contempt was in his eyes.

She lifted her head slowly and sat beside him with fingers interlaced waiting for the punishment she knew was coming.

"I am going away," he said presently.

She started. "Back to Blow Weston, do you mean?"

He shook his head and smiled, not too pleasantly. "You don't wish me to go there, do you, Vi? Farther afield, dear, where I shall be out of mischief —where you won't be troubled with these anxieties, I am going back to Paris." He stopped, took the cigarette from his lips, and with the hand that held it, waved away the delicate rings of smoke from before his eyes. "I am going to *stay* there," he finished.

Violet's face twitched painfully, the tears started, smartingly, beneath the lashes.

"I think you are cruel to me," she said, but so softly, with such an appeal in her whispering voice.

"I am only anxious to teach you, my dear Vi, what you are so slow in learning. I will *not*—be interfered with."

She made no response. A tear or two came running silently over her cheek, and dropped on the straining, clasped fingers.

"Why did you object to my stopping at Carlyons' house now and again?" he asked her. "Tell me."

No answer.

"Don't you care to put it into words? Then I will do it for you. You did me the honor to be jealous of me—not quite for the first time, Vi. It is a little failing of yours, dear. You remember Maude Buller, and poor little Mrs. Stroude, and that fat old woman at Rome—not to mention a score of other cases?"

She moved closer to him and impulsively grasped the arm that rested on the table and bent her face upon his hands. "I can't help it," she said humbly. "I know I am silly. I know I have constantly made mistakes and tortured myself for nothing. I do fight against it— It is because I love you so, Ted."

He smiled with a contemptuous pity, looking down upon her, and he lightly smoothed her smooth brown hair with the little finger of the hand that held the cigarette. The caress, if it could be called one, was over in a minute, but Violet, humbly grateful, surreptitiously kissed the coat sleeve she was holding.

"And now—is it Caroline Jervois, whose husband is scarcely cold in his grave, of whom you are jealous? or Bill's old housekeeper, perhaps the grenadier-like person with the moustache? Or is it Betty Jervois, who—" a pause here while he deliberately extinguished the burnt out end of the cigarette in his coffee saucer—"who is going to be Bill's wife?"

Violet raised her head—she could not hear so well with her eyes hidden—her eyes opened widely and

clung, startled, to her husband's face: "Is that true?" she asked, "Are you sure?"

"He told me so himself. I suppose he knows," Harringay answered indifferently. "He's a very good fellow. I wish him luck, I'm sure. In the meantime I am going to Paris."

"Not yet. Stay with me for a little while, Ted."

He shook his head, his face was not the face of a man easily moved by a woman's pleading.

"You are going away to punish me. Forgive me instead. It is only my being foolish once more. I thought you must admire her—and I was so much alone! I am ashamed. Forgive me, Ted."

"My dear girl, don't be abject! I forgive you, of course, anything I suppose must be forgiven to a jealous woman."

He patted the hands that held his coat sleeve, twisted his arm free of their grasp, and got up from the table.

"You won't go to Paris, Ted?"

"Not to-day, certainly."

"To-morrow?"

"I don't know. Perhaps not to-morrow." He looked back at her from the door through which he was passing: "What's the good of trying to keep me tied to your apron strings, Vi? Don't you know by this time that you can't do it?"

"I should know that, certainly," Violet said to herself, gazing hopelessly at the door which had closed behind him.

Her influence over him had in the beginning been exceedingly slight, and it was for the briefest possible space that she had held it, yet she could not forget that there had been such a time. She could never be

warned from striving to regain what was irrecoverable, causing herself fresh and exquisite pain at each failure.

"There is no reason why married people should not be perfectly happy, if only they will leave each other alone," was a maxim of Ted Harringay's which he practised as well as preached. But it was no solace to the clinging, dependent nature of Violet that he gave the license he required. The fact that she might go and come, think and act, spend and lend unquestioned, filled her with pain and grieving rather than pleasure. She would have loved to open all the trivial stores of her mind to him, she could never understand that he was bored by a faithful recital of the details of the day. Nothing that he said to her of himself could have been too minute to interest her, but he, who had guaged the shallow depths of his wife's understanding even in those days when he had fancied himself in love with her, had never attempted to make a companion of her, shutting his lips tightly over the things that had a meaning for him, and maintaining a contemptuous silence upon the subjects that Violet made her own.

She sat for long after he had left her silently brooding over her new cause of offence she had given him —her last, and as it seemed at present, her chiefest mistake. She was deeply ashamed of herself, and it was a feeling to which she was sadly accustomed. Her husband, who was never cruel to her, or cross, even—nearly always forbearing and kind—had a knack of making her feel ashamed.

The jealousy which had gnawed so cruelly at her heart as she sat, lonely, in Edmundsbury, while her husband tended the sick bed of her uncle at Blow

Weston, had been more absurd, more utterly groundless—she saw it now—than that which had made the thought of the big coarse creature whose picture he had painted in Rome, a torturing thought to her. It had been more ridiculous than that which had come between pretty Maude Bullen, her kindest, truest friend, and herself. Far more unworthy of her than all the other fears and torments which her deafness and her foolish imaginings had manufactured for her. Surely by now she should have grown accustomed to her husband's pursuit of anything—man, woman, or idea—which promised for the time being, to afford him interest. While the attraction lasted, he was not to be turned aside. It had never lasted long. There was nothing to be afraid of.

And to have been jealous of Betty Jervois! The little girl she had loved in her own happy girlhood. The promised wife of Bill Carlyon! How strange that seemed. What a curious readjustment of ideas it necessitated!

She had grown to have a certain prescience of what would be likely to attract her husband. At the first sight of Betty with her fine, full figure, her round white cheeks, her grey, black-shadowed eyes, now passionate, now sullen, her thickly waving, dark red hair, she had felt, with the familiar shrinking of the heart, that Ted would admire her. When he had become such a frequent visitor at Blow Weston she had not for a moment doubted the cause. His kindness to a sick man? He was quite capable of kindness, but—she knew her husband!

And although she was ashamed of the jealousy she had felt she knew him still. The ministering to no sick bed would have claimed him so long. It had

been Betty. He had liked to look at her, to watch her. The quick changes of temperament had interested and amused him—her headlong wrath, her quick repentance, her strength and weakness, the sunshine and the storm of her nature! Perhaps he had wished to make a picture of her—where was the harm? Betty Jervois! The little child Betty of Harringay's and Violet's youth, the promised wife of Bill Carlyon whom both had wronged!

In the week that intervened between Harringay's return to his wife and the funeral of the rector of Blow Weston, Violet did not cease to feel and to show contrition, and her husband, although he still held out the threat of Paris did not go. In those days, too, the project slowly formed itself in Violet's mind which she ultimately successfully carried out. If she asked Betty Jervois to stay with her after her father's death it must prove conclusively to all concerned that she could not possibly be jealous of her. If Betty yielded to her request it was just possible that Ted might not go away.

And this plan, fearful that she might not be able to achieve it, she kept in the secrecy of her own mind, pleasing herself by imagining the surprise she would give to her husband when she brought him Betty Jervois as a visitor beneath his roof.

CHAPTER XI.

I WONDER WHY YOU CAME.

"I was not sure you would care to leave home so soon, but I thought the change of scene might do you good; and I shall be so pleased to have you with me," Violet said, as they sat side by side in the carriage on their homeward way.

"If you knew how thankful I am to come!" Betty responded with a fervor there could be no mistaking. "It is no compliment to you, Violet, for I would go anywhere—anywhere to get away from Caroline."

On their arrival Violet sought her husband in the room which had been fitted up for his use as a studio in the days when his mother had first welcomed the idea that her son was destined to become a great artist. He had been quite a boy then and he and his mother had lavished money without stint on its decoration. The result was a sumptuousness which accorded little with his taste of to-day, but to which, remembering its origin, he submitted without a thought of change.

One of his many unfinished canvases was arranged upon an easel, and he stood before it, his hands in his pockets, and his pipe in his mouth when his wife came into the room. He had stood so for longer than he knew, thinking not at all of the picture—an unsatisfactory effort enough, discarded long ago. He had almost no illusions about his place as an artist. He had money and many friends and influence of a kind,

and men had lied to him about his work. For a time their words had been agreeable, but he had always known that they lied. The saving grace was his of an honest discontent with himself and all his works. He knew that men did worse—sold worse, exhibited worse on gallery walls, but the fact did not reconcile him to his own shortcoming. It was months now since he had done more than make sketches for pictures never commenced. It was not, therefore, for the sake of the art to which it should have been devoted that he now frequented his studio. But solitude suited his present mood, and in the studio he could generally command it.

So he stood and stared without seeing it at the unsatisfactory attempt before him—the picture of an ugly, black-browed woman with a red apron slung about her shoulders, and a black-headed baby at her breast. And the thought which had been with him day and night of late, and from which he no longer attempted even to escape, hammered relentlessly at his brain; the thought of a temptation which might prove too strong for him yet, which he could not make up his mind to put irrevocably behind him for ever—of the dastard and villain it was possible, circumstances assisting, he might become—the scoundrel, traitor, outcast, such as decent men must spit upon!

Then the door opened and his wife came in, walked, in her becoming slight mourning, a very delicate agreeable vision—over the rugs and the polished floor.

He did not turn to look at her, he knew very well who was there; the light, uncertain step, the soft unobtrusive rustle of silk-lined garments filled him with an impatience and an irritation that showed itself in

his face. He bent nearer to the picture to hide that exhibition and she laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"Ted, I have brought home some one to stay with us," she said, "guess who it is, dear."

But he declined to guess, or to exhibit the faintest curiosity about Violet's visitor, and she had to tell him.

"It is Betty Jervois. She looks so pale and weary, poor child. I thought the little change might do her good. She was so glad to come, Ted."

He lifted the picture from the easel, and holding it for a minute close to his eyes, returned it to its position face downward, as if unable to endure the sullen scowl of the black-browed woman for an instant longer. Then he turned to his wife.

"What possessed you to do that?" he asked her roughly. She did not catch the words but the expression of his face showed her that all was not right. He looked at her so curiously that she was uneasy and began to falter forth excuses.

"I hope you will not mind," she said, "I thought perhaps you would be pleased, dear. It will be a little change for me too, Ted."

He nodded his head, as accepting her explanation. "Oh, as you like—very well," his lips said.

"You have thought better about running away so quickly, dear?"

"To Paris? I had been thinking of stopping till next week. I have changed my mind. I shall go to-morrow."

"Oh Ted! Now? If I had known that I never would have invited Betty Jervois."

"I wonder why in God's name you did invite her!" he said; but he had turned his back on her and she did not hear.

She watched him for a minute as he threw open a portfolio standing on a chair, and began to hunt irritably therein for something he apparently did not find, then with a sigh she turned away. She was disappointed in that she had meant to please him and to make him pleased with her, and had failed; but relieved because her heart must now be set entirely at rest about that jealous imagining of hers.

When his wife had left him Harringay ordered his horse and rode away by himself, away from Edmundsbury, many a mile along lonely country roads. Violet and Betty, seeing the horse led round, went to the window and watched him mount. Violet, dismayed at his want of civility in not having come forward to welcome his guest, redoubled her own attentions, endeavoring to compensate Betty for the discourtesy of the host. But while she smiled and whispered her little speeches of welcome and of affection she thought in her heart, that here was another mistake she had made, and that Ted was this time seriously annoyed.

"Now," said Harringay, mentally addressing the good horse beneath him, as, watched by the women, he cantered through the drive gates and turned on to the road. "If you will manage to break my neck before you carry me home again, Prince Otto, you'll do a thing to be proud of among horses for ever, and will prove yourself of infinite service, not only to your master but to your master's friends."

But Prince Otto missed that opportunity for glory —and Harringay, for his part, did not set him to race a train or to gallop down the sides of a sandpit, which things he might have done, had he been serious in

his exhortation—and man and horse arrived home in good time for dinner, with fair appetites and without accident to flesh or bone.

"Violet tells me you are going away to-morrow," Betty said to him, when, a few minutes before dinner, he came into the room where she was sitting alone.

"Yes," he said sullenly, "I am going."

He took up a new illustrated paper which lay on a table between them and began to turn over the leaves.

"I am sorry," said Betty, and, engrossed in the paper he made no reply.

She watched what could be seen of his expressionless face for a while in silence. Then:

"Shall you be away all the time I am here, Mr. Harringay?" she asked him.

"In all probability, Miss Jervois."

"It would be polite of you to say you also were sorry," she said with impatience.

"Polite?" he repeated, leaning closer over the paper. "But if I prefer to be safe?"

She drew back a little at that, and he went on turning over the pages of his sketch.

"It would be 'polite' of me to congratulate you on your engagement, perhaps?" he said, suddenly lifting his face.

"It would be not only polite but kind," she replied with spirit.

"Then will you accept my congratulations?" Harringay asked, and threw the paper on the table and got up as if that were the finish of the matter. But having turned his back on her and walked over to the window he came slowly back again and stood before her. "Carlyon is the best fellow the world holds—and my dear friend," he said in an altered

voice. "He deserves his luck. I can't say more for him than that."

Then Betty thanked him without effusion, and Violet came into the room, and soon they went to dinner.

Later Violet went to the piano. She could not sing now, but her touch was ever plaintive and sweet. On those occasions when husband and wife passed an evening *tête-à-tête*, Harringay kept her playing to him. It was soothing to the nerves and it spared him the trouble of talking to her.

Since dinner the conversation between the two women had flagged a good deal. Betty was tired; the effort to make herself heard by her hostess was too great a strain on her. Harringay neither joined in, nor did he appear to listen. It was a relief to the visitor when the music began.

"Keep on playing, Violet, please," she said, forgetful that Violet, with her back to her, could not hear.

She lay back in her chair, with dreaming, listening face, her half-closed eyes upon the fire. Perhaps she was unconscious that Harringay's gaze had strayed from the book in his hand, and rested upon her face. She was a lovely woman just then, and she looked as unconscious as if she had been a lovely child. But it is not safe to trust too entirely in a woman's pose.

Violet, in her corner at the piano, her back to the long room, played on. Violet's husband got up from his place and sat himself down in the chair his wife had vacated by Betty's side.

"Am I to go to-morrow?" he asked her, leaning forward, with bent head, fingering a long streamer of black ribbon that fell from the belt at Betty's waist.

The skin of her face and throat grew pink, and her breast heaved, she made him no other answer.

"You shall decide," he said, so low that she hardly caught the words. "It shall be as you wish."

"I don't know," she whispered faintly, "I don't know."

"Do you wish me to go?"

No answer.

"Betty, do you wish—"

Violet swung round upon the music-stool:

"Don't you like those queer little bits of Greig's!" she asked of the back of Betty's head.

And Harringay signalled to her with a quick nod or two, and a rather artificial-looking smile. "Yes," —that they liked them very much indeed—that she was to go on—to give them some more of Greig.

He waited, watching his wife, till Greig began again, then leaned forward, resuming his old position, but he ceased to look at the ribbon in his fingers now, looked instead in Betty's face.

"I wonder why you came here?" he said.

Betty strove vainly for her familiar flippancy:

"I hoped I should be welcome," she said, low and breathless for all her effort to be calm.

"To me? Did you think of me?"

"Of course. How could I come to your house and not think of you?"

"But it is of Carlyon you should have thought. It is of him—poor fellow!—that I think in those rare pauses in my consciousness when I am not thinking of—some one else. Women are different, I suppose."

Betty pouted her lips—such tempting, full red lips, tremulous just now, too, like a child's:

"It is not in my bargain to think always of him," she said.

And then one of her quick compunctions seized her, the instinct of faithfulness to her childhood's friend reasserting itself against the all but irresistible attraction which seduced her from her loyalty.

"Oh, poor Bill!" she said hurriedly. "There is no one in the world like Bill."

And with that she got up from her chair, went to the piano, and glued herself to Violet's side for the rest of the evening.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MOONLIGHT SONATA.

THE Reverend William Carlyon had taken to saddle exercise of late for it seemed to him that he was making flesh over quickly, and he hoped that riding would reduce his lamentable tendency to fat. Betty, walking with Violet in the September morning around the spick and span garden paths, and seeing her lover approach, decided at once that on horseback Bill certainly did not look his best.

"Have you crawled in that fashion all the way?" she asked him, having gone forward to meet him on the drive. "Why, you must have been up at dawn to get here! And your stirrup straps want lengthening, Bill."

"They're let down as far as they'll go. It's been preciously uncomfortable, Betty."

"It certainly isn't a pretty sight," said Betty, following an inexplicable, irresistible desire to be cruel to the man. She was horribly impatient of this meeting. She did not know if it was herself or Bill that she hated; she only felt that at this junction they ought to have been kept apart. "The poor thing isn't equal to your weight," she went on, watching the sorry steed led away when the curate had dismounted. "It is positive cruelty to ride her. I really hope you won't be guilty of such barbarity again, Bill."

"So long as I'm here all right, it doesn't matter much, I suppose," said Bill, feeling helpless under the injustice of the attack. Bill Carlyon to be accused of cruelty to living thing, and by Betty who knew him! "Never mind the mare, Betty."

"The Harringays will think you a rather early visitor, I'm afraid."

"If I'm not too early for you, I don't care what the Harringays think."

"Why have you come, Bill?"

He looked at her in surprised reproach—they had turned into the garden and were walking side by side, among the flower beds in front of the house. "Why have I come?" he repeated. "Why did you go, rather, Betty? Where you are, I have a right to be, haven't I? Did you expect anything else than that I should come?"

"I don't know," she said, "you haven't given me time to expect anything." Then she laughed and the color came to her face: "You are evidently of Mr. Harringay's opinion," she told him. "He tells me I must think of you and nothing but you—morning, noon and night."

"That would be very foolish and unnecessary," the curate said with a touch of stiffness. "Is Harringay here, then?"

"Somewhere here about. He goes to Paris directly."

"How soon is 'directly,' Betty?"

"To-day, perhaps—perhaps to-morrow. I haven't questioned him."

"Can't we get away from all these staring windows? I have something particular to say to you."

"It is warm and sunny here. I have thin shoes, and these paths are dry and hard. The windows

won't interrupt. Do you suppose anyone takes interest enough in us to spy upon us?"

"Then put your hand on my arm, dear. We seem to be talking with a wall between us. I want to be certain nothing is there."

But Betty would not take his arm, and the thing he had to suggest to her which he had put into a thousand tender and loving forms as he rode along was prepounded, after all, in a manner which seemed to rob the plan of all its blissful charm.

"I want you to be married to me at once, and come home with me to Queen Anne's."

"With my father scarcely in his grave! Have you forgotten?"

"What harm should we be doing to your father's memory? Come into church early one morning in, say, three weeks time—a month if you like—and let us be married."

She had moved a step farther from him on the narrow path, and her face had grown hard. "You talked of six months and I told you it was too soon, and now it is three weeks!" she said. "Of course I will not do it."

"I will not bother you to do it against your will," he said, and she heard his bitter disappointment in his voice, and would not look him in the face. "I only hoped the plan might seem to you as happy as it did to me."

"I refuse to hear another word about the plan," Betty said.

She knew that she was treating him brutally, but she feared to be more kind. She dared not descend from her height of displeasure, to argue the question because what had she to bring forward against the

plan which he proposed—a plan which filled her with shrinking, with revolt, with positive terror?

So she put a summary end to the discussion and the *tête-à-tête* by leading the way indoors; and presently Carlyon found himself shouting comments on the weather and the length of his ride to Violet in the morning room, while Betty stood with her back turned to them looking out of window.

Bill was chilled and disheartened, but by no means inclined to accept defeat so easily. He was so in love with the plan himself, looked at from every point of view it appeared to have no drawback. And he had thought of it till he was steeped to the lips in the charm of it—it "filled the bill" for him. How could he allow it to be put on one side so lightly? Presently almost without volition of his own, he found himself shouting to Violet the injunction not to keep Betty for long: "I want her to come back and be married almost at once," he said.

And Violet being sympathetic, he was presently unfolding his plan to her at the top of his voice, she bending her better ear to him, and smiling and whispering. "Eh?" and the long drawn interrogative "Wm-m-m?" which Harringay found so irritating, and Bill repeating himself, and growing louder and louder in his arguments.

The noise brought Harringay into the room, but Betty had escaped then. Violet, with the light of sympathy shining in her pretty eyes, said an explanatory word or two to her husband, who laughed indulgently.

"No time like the present, Bill," he said. "A bird in the hand, you know, and so on."

But those wise saws did not appear appropriate to

the other man—he felt inclined to resent their application; and the sound of Harringay's laughter did not ring true, or please him.

"Nothing is settled," he said, with a seriousness he intended for a reproof, "Betty has only just been told of the plan"—

"And she does not fall in quite at once," Harringay finished. "That of course. Women generally hang back in these matters."

"I hear that you are going away," said Bill, disinclined to pursue the subject.

"To-morrow, or the next day, or the day after," Harringay made answer. "My time is my own, unfortunately for me. I am in no particular hurry."

And Carlyon was conscious of receiving that assurance with anything but joy. He was ashamed of the discomfort he felt in his house, of the uneasiness that possessed him. The man was one he had always loved. Even at the time of that early treachery he had never succeeded in hating him. Bill, who was an optimist in all things, had a boundless faith in human nature. For the very reason that Harringay had played him false once he felt it to be a double impossibility that he should mean evil to him again. It was himself and his own unfaithfulness he despised for the pang of distrust that now and again wrung his heart. Harringay—poor fellow, had sinned against him and been forgiven; he wronged not only Harringay but every generous instinct of his own being by dreaming it possible that Harringay could so sin again. Betty had the faithfullest heart. Violet was deeply attached to her husband—one saw it in every glance. And yet—and yet he did not feel safe.

For hours after he should have been astride his

sorry old mare, jogging on his homeward way he stopped in the Harringay's way—it being quite evident to him that he was in their way. He knew that Violet and Betty had planned a drive which his presence hindered them from taking, he felt that Harringay and he were out of sympathy for a time and that his society was a weariness to the other man, and yet he stayed on.

It was Betty, who, with accustomed audacity, got rid of him at last:

"You don't cover more than four miles an hour with that miserable old Kitty," she reminded him. "If you want to be home before midnight, you had better be stirring," and at last he had to consent to depart.

"I wish I could take you with me," he said to her while they watched, side by side, in the window for the arrival of the mare.

"Oh, poor Kitty!" she sighed. "As if your own weight were not enough!"

"I hate to leave you here, Betty."

"What do you mean? Do you think that they will eat me? Really, Bill, you are very absurd," she said.

But now that he was going away she smiled on him, and allowed him to cover with his the hand that had played with the window cord, and to remind her how natural it was that he should wish to keep her always at his side.

The fourteen miles which separated them were not an insurmountable distance as Kitty had that day triumphantly proved, she told him, and added that through seeing less of her he would probably come to value her more.

"You will come back almost at once, Betty?"

"Almost," she promised him, good-naturedly, "you would not wish me to run away and leave Violet directly her husband is gone?"

"Is he going, really?" he could not help saying, eagerly. And Violet advised him to put that question to Harringay himself.

"Betty, do as I ask you. Marry me at once, and let there be an end to all this."

The hand he had captured made an effort to escape but he held it fast.

"Almost at once, Bill. Almost."

Then his horse came up and she led the way to the door. They all came forward to see him mount. "Speed the parting guest," said Bill to himself with uncontrollable bitterness.

"I will ride over again to-morrow," he promised as he settled himself in his saddle.

Betty gave a laugh of dismay, "This poor beast of yours must have at least four days' rest," she declared; and remembered too that Violet and she were going to be out for the greater part of the day.

"Come, all the same, Bill," the master of the house said kindly. "You and I can manage to pass an hour or so without the ladies, surely."

"And how have you and Carlyon settled your differences?" Harringay asked her later, in the drawing-room, under cover of those sweet influences with which the Moonlight Sonata opens.

"Bill and I have no differences," said Betty with severity.

"He wants to marry you to-morrow; you want to

put it off to the safe indefiniteness of 'some day.' Isn't that a difference?"

"It does not exist any longer."

"He has knocked under. What an ass!"

"Oh, you don't know Bill and me. It is I who have knocked under."

"You are going to be married—directly?"

"It sounds impossible—but I think I promised."

He was silent till she lifted her eyes and looked at him with an impatient, questioning "Well."

"I am surprised. That is all."

"I tell you don't know Bill and me. It is always I who give way, sooner or later."

"Do you ever give way against your will?"

"Often—often!"

"Against your better judgment, sometimes?"

She laughed slightly: "I don't pretend to judgment. Impulse is all I have to depend on. Bill keeps me straight. I think Bill is generally right."

"From his point of view, no doubt."

"And if I am to marry him his ideas will have to be mine, I suppose."

"You've got very primitive ideas of matrimony," he said.

He shifted the position of his chair, and looked over at his wife. The moon was just beginning to peep from the cloud. Violet had not a thought just then but the delicious melody her delicate fingers evoked.

"Do you suppose that Violet and I regard matters always from the same standpoint?" Harringay asked.

"How beautifully she plays!" said Betty.

"The beauties of the Moonlight Sonata are as nothing to the charms of irrelevance," he remarked.

"Violet adores her husband," said Betty, blushing over the words.

"Oh, yes. And I adore Violet. And Bill adores you. And you adore Bill. What a delightful quartette, and what a delectable arrangement. And how happy we all ought to be in this best of all possible worlds!"

"I suppose people are, sometimes," Betty said, and sighed enviously, and with the hopelessness of twenty years or so. She leaned her head back on the top of her chair and looked dreamily upward. "Don't you think so?"

"Think what?" he asked softly, as he watched her.

"That people are sometimes happy?"

"I don't know. I never have been. I'd give a good deal—I'd give ten years of my life, say, for ten months—yes, for ten days, even. Would you? What would you give?"

She shook her head slowly. "I couldn't offer high enough terms," she said.

"Let me bargain for you," he suggested with a suspicion of eagerness. "Would you give—let me see—the conventionalities, superstitions, formalities, which at present hedge you in—for instance?"

She laughed. "With all my heart—if they exist," she assured him.

"Would you give your acquaintances—the people about you who have tried to mould you in their own pattern, who expect you to walk beside them in the grooves they have prepared for you on pain of being cast into outer darkness beyond their sanction and favor. You would give them?"

"Gladly. Take them all."

"Your friends?"

She shook her head: "Not the people who love me. Certainly not."

"Wait a minute. You are like all women, niggardly. Who are the people who love you?"

"Peter and Emily and—and—"

"Oh, Carlyon, of course," he said impatiently. "Anyone else?"

"Perhaps another or two."

"You shall not give them—you shall keep them all. They will have to readjust their ideas of you, perhaps, not love you less, but—"

"Be grieved with me, disappointed in me?"

"Well?"

"I should have to fail them in some way—be false to their trust in me? No! I won't have your happiness," Betty cried, and all at once sat upright in her chair and opened deep eyes upon him.

"You women, with all your extravagance, never know how to be generous," he said. "Heaven is offered you, and you stop to haggle over the price."

"Your heaven is too dear."

"You certainly don't deserve it if you are incapable of renunciation," he said.

And so on. There is little profit in retailing such conversations—the foolish, half-veiled talk of a forbidden subject, the fencing with words, the unconsciousness that is mostly pretence. The prelude to the familiar tragedy is generally in that key—aplaying with fire, ajuggling with edged tools, aplucking of those flowers which grow on the very edge of the precipice.

And of such conversations there were many. For the days went on and Harringay did not go to Paris.

Each day the departure hung, threatening, over the heads of the household, each evening found the master of the house lounging still in his wife's drawing-room. The song or two which Violet exacted from him as his contribution to the general entertainment being over, he would give himself up to the more or less persistent study of Betty's face, pale and passionate and sad, while the dreamy melodies dropping from Violet's fingers, floated softly, sadly, seductively, through the room.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I PITY TAKE ON ALL POOR WOMEN."

ALTHOUGH daily the certainty grew upon him that his visits were not acceptable to the girl, Carlyon was not to be frightened from his post. Day by day he crawled over on the back of his mare Kitty or jolted over in the miller's cart or walked when these modes of locomotion failed him. He came, and he would not be deterred; nor was it easy, once assured, to send him away. And ever he put forth that plea of his for an early marriage, and each day with more and more of earnestness he entreated Betty to return with him to Blow Weston.

And Betty, who, now cold to him, now petulant and unreasonable, was now and then in the mood in which he found her most hard to leave, most impossible to manage—humble and gentle and full of remorse, and the old, clinging, childlike affection. And, whatever the change in her manner, he knew that she was never hard of heart at all, never really forgetful of the claims upon her of those who loved her.

But if in those days she was a trouble and an anxiety to her affianced husband she gave herself no easy time. There were hours in each day when she told herself that this thing which Bill demanded of her must be done, that the repugnances she could feel must weigh with her against the knowledge that he wished it. And there were hours again when it seemed impossible and she knew that the sacrifice demanded was one which could never be performed.

And the conflict and all the sorrow she had undergone began to tell upon her who knew nothing of physical suffering and had had hardly a day's illness in her life. She lost appetite and could not sleep at night, but tossed the hours away in feverish perplexity and self-reproach; or worse still, passed them in a blissful waking dream of words and looks and tones, repeating to herself conversations that had taken place during the day, improving, re-constructing, imagining new ones.

So that her face grew paler and her eyes more large and sad. So that Bill, looking upon her had a new anxiety added to that which made his heart so heavy. So that Violet grew kinder and more solicitous for her comfort, saying that the long spell of nursing and the sadness of all about her had told on Betty and insisting that she must not dream of getting married until she had become well and strong. So that Harringay was possessed with the beauty of the heavy-lidded eyes, the new languor of every movement, the provoking charm of the face that paled and flushed at a word.

At last, after a fortnight of such shilly-shallying—a fortnight, on the face of things, passing smoothly and uneventfully enough but in which two or three of the people concerned felt that they had lived through ages of rapture and pain—there came a day when Carlyon, calling at the Harringay's house, found Betty denied to him.

Violet came to him, full of apologies. Betty had passed a wakeful night, she was at once feverish and languid, she had asked to be permitted to keep her room.

Bill was miserable with anxiety. He demanded of

Mrs. Harringay that he should at once be taken to see the girl.

Violet, distracted between her desire to be kind to Bill, and her fear of offending Betty, dared not accede to the request without consulting the latter.

Betty, appealed to, had sent a decided refusal.

She had sprung from the sofa and had locked the door on Violet's back, as that lady left the room ; and until she heard the sound of Carlyon's wheels, as, disconsolate and sore at heart, he drove away, she would not be induced to open it. But when she knew that the man was really gone, she hid her face in the cushion and cried as though her heart would break, and called upon Bill's name with choking sobs, and cried to herself that she had broken his heart—she had broken his heart!

For the letter which Carlyon received next morning, whose contents he seemed to have expected all along, while at the same time they turned him sick and giddy with surprise, had then been written and dispatched.

" Dear Bill," this precious epistle ran,

" Will you let all be over between us? You must, because I am not happy at all in the thought of marrying you. I am not good enough for you. I could never make you happy. Write me a line to say you will do this for me. You have always done everything I wanted—this is only one little thing more. Do say you think I am right in this, and that you don't care much. This will make me happier. I think of nothing but your goodness and I hate myself. So forgive me—

" Yours, Betty."

When Betty had cried herself into a semblance of calm, Violet came in and tea was served to them by the invalid's sofa. And Betty who had eaten nothing all day, was glad of the tea, and presently was conscious of a great feeling of relief, almost of rejoicing. The deed was done painful as it was, past recall, and oh, the joy of having, anyhow, shifted that burden—of being free! The color came to her lips again, her eyes shone, she laughed and joked over the enormous appetite which she suddenly exhibited.

Violet smiled with her wistful, half envious appreciation of the youth and light-heartedness she knew to be so attractive, and which she felt that she, herself, had lost for ever.

"That is more like the old Betty," she whispered, caressing the girl's hand as it lay on the little table beside her. "You have been looking so sad and worried lately, dear, it is delightful to see you so happy once more."

Happy? Betty put down the cup and the half-eaten tea-cake, and the light died out of her face where every shade of feeling showed. "Happy?" she repeated to herself—"happy?"

Violet could not hear the questioning word. She gave Betty's hand a final squeeze and went on drinking her own tea. She started at the girl's eager voice in her ear.

"M-m-m?" she inquired, with that peculiar expression which her face acquired in the effort to keep her ear and her eye turned at the same time upon her companion. "The toast bad, did you say, dear?"

"The post-bag! It has left, hasn't it? If I ran very quickly do you suppose I could overtake it before the letters are posted."

"Eh-h-h?" said Violet softly drawling as was her custom over the leisurely word.

But Betty would not wait to repeat herself. She flew up from the sofa, caught up a hat from the drawers, and ran downstairs, through the hall, casting a glance to the table there to make sure the post-bag had gone, out into the garden and so, breathless in her hurry, along the road.

She had not ran far in the direction of the post office when she met the servant whose duty it was to take the bag returning. The letters were gone.

The expression with which she learned that her repentance came too late was on her face still when she saw Harringay, coming along the road, beneath the tender tints of the early evening sky, to meet her.

She walked at his side in silence for a minute; "I was too late," she said at length.

He did not ask for what. There was something weighty in her tone he noticed, and her eyes were tragic, but he was not one to force a confidence.

"I should like to paint you, with that look on your face, as one of the foolish virgins," he said. "They also were too late for something, were they not?"

"You often say you would like to paint me with this or that look, but you never do it," she said, listlessly, walking wearily along the road by his side.

"Because I dare not. I think I know your face by heart." He half closed his eyes as if he were looking within, considering features engraven there. "Yes—every line of it, every trick of it. That is why no portrait would satisfy me. I should put every scrap of knowledge, and what talent I possess into my effort to reproduce it—and I should shoot myself with dis-

gust at my failure. You don't want me to paint you, do you?" he asked her presently.

"Oh, no."

"For what have you been too late? Am I to know?"

"A letter I wrote. I wanted it to get it back. I was too late."

"I must paint you as the young woman with the extinguished lamp, after all. I must try to get the tone of your voice in that 'too late' into the picture too."

"Before you blow out your brains, you might spare a bullet for mine while you were about it. How I wish you would."

"What would Carlyon say?"

"That is all done with. All over. I have written to tell him so."

"Was that the letter you were anxious to recall?" he asked her after a moment's pause; and she told him that it was.

"Then it is as if it had never been written. You will express your repentance; Carlyon will ask no questions. You will live happily ever after. The usual wind-up of all such pretty stories."

"I wish I could get away," said Betty irritably, looking away from him, paying no attention, apparently, to him and his words.

"Away from whom? From me? From us? From Carlyon?"

"If I could only never see him again! I hate to hurt people—not because of their pain, but because I cannot bear to see their pain. If I only need not see it! If I could get away!"

"That can be easily managed," he quietly assured her. "You shall go away to-morrow. We will all go."

She shook her head. "Of course I must not," and he wasted no breath in persuading her.

"The evenings are delicious still," presently, he said. "Oh, such an evening as this, do you ever have a longing upon you to hear the water lapping against a boat's side?"

"I don't know. I have had so little to do with seas and rivers. That may be one among the many undefined things I long for."

"It is the peacefullest, most soothing of all sounds. You sit in the boat, motionless, and the evening and the silence gather round, and the murmur of the river is only the deepest part of the silence. Then, your hopes and your fears, your past life and your future die out of you. You are emptied of your very thoughts. You sit there a part of the quiet and the stillness and the night. It is like death. You are dead until you make an effort to come back to life again."

"I should like to feel that," Betty said. "I hope I should forget to make the effort to come back."

"I shall not let you forget. I shall row you back to the wherry and you will come to life to see the gnats dancing low upon the water, to see the lights in the cabin window. Or perhaps the nights are too chill now for sleeping out, and we will all put up at a little inn I know by the riverside, and you will hear the bargees singing over their beer in the inn kitchen. Yes. We will go to the river. There is nothing like the river to help us over difficult places. I long for it too. I am a little bit mad at times, although I keep my madness to myself as a rule, I hope. The river may make me sane."

When Betty came down an hour late to breakfast the next morning her hostess told her "Ted," whose

movements were always disturbingly sudden and unlooked for, had decided in the night that a blow on the river would do them all good. He had gone to hire a yacht or a wherry, or failing that, rooms at a riverside inn, and the ladies were to follow him by a certain train later on.

This news was also imparted to William Carlyon, when he appeared at noontime.

Betty sent word to him that she was packing and could not appear.

He persisted.

The servant who carried up his reiterated request that she should come down to him, descended with a bit of folded paper on which was written "I beg you not to insist on seeing me. It can do no good. I cannot see you."

To which he scrawled the reply, "You must see me. It is a matter of life and death. I shall search the house for you if you don't come down."

At that she appeared. With the view of carrying out his threat to seek her, he had got as far as the hall, when he saw her coming downstairs. He took her hand without a word, and drew her into a room away from that in which Violet was sitting awaiting the arrival of the carriage which was to take her to the station. He held her hand for quite a long time in silence, finding speech at the moment impossible. At length, "This is a great misfortune for us both, dear," he said.

Betty's lips shook and she looked away from him: "It can't be helped," she said in the low tone of hopelessness. "I want you to believe, Bill, it can't be helped."

"I will try to believe that," he said gently, and gripped the hand tighter, "I will try."

"I—so hate to hurt you and give you pain!"

"I am sure of that. You must not be unhappy about me, dear. I suppose I can bear what is sent me to bear. It is not about myself I have come to talk, Betty. I have come to take you away from this house at once."

Her lip grew steady and she turned upon him with a lifted head: "Why?"

"Never mind why. Come."

"To Caroline?"

"Back to your father's house—where your place is—where you will be safe."

"I am perfectly safe as I am. I will not go back to Caroline."

"At any rate come away. You are not penniless or dependent on anyone, remember. Your mother's little fortune is yours now, and Peter's, and Emily's. There is not much, yet enough to make you your own mistress."

"I am glad," she said slowly. "Why did no one explain that to me before? I will go back, then, and work at my art."

"I will take you up to London this very day if you like. To-morrow at latest. Only come."

She waited for a moment then: "Why?" she asked again, but with averted eyes and in a coward tone.

He looked at her steadily for a moment: "You know why," he said, but in a whisper. Because of the pain at his heart he could not trust his voice.

"Yet, tell me," she whispered fearfully back.

"Because of this man—Harringay. I have known

you all my life and you have never lied to me, Betty. Don't tell me you don't understand."

She stood silent with averted face.

"I had had my lesson. He cheated me, and I trusted him again with what was infinitely more precious. He has cheated me again."

"He has not," Betty said. A little of her old fire came back in defence of the man who was absent. "He has never said one word of—of—"

He threw up a hand authoritatively. "Have a little mercy. Spare me that at least," he said.

Then she bent her head upon her hand and began quietly and hopelessly to cry. "What shall I do?" she said. "Oh Bill, what shall I do?"

"Tell me," said Bill curtly, wondering, in the infinite sickness of his soul, how much he could be called on to bear.

"He has been good—and I have, sometimes, tried to be—but I love him," Betty said through her tears. "I think I have loved him since I was a little child." Then she lifted her head and looked at Carlyon and ceased to cry. "What am I to do?" she asked him again.

"Do?" he said, "Can you ask? Leave this house instantly. Never see the man again. Have you forgotten that he is another woman's husband?"

"I can't," she said, "I have to think of him a little. I won't leave him like that. If I were cold-blooded—if I felt nothing!—I can't."

Then he put his hands on her shoulders, and made her look him in the face.

"Betty," he said, very slowly and dropping his voice, "have you thought what it is to tempt a soul to sin?"

She looked at him without reply, and might have

thought as she looked, that simplicity and goodness have a dignity of their own, and that in suffering, silently and unselfishly endured, there is a kind of eloquence.

"This man," he went on, "he took his wife by foul means, but she is his wife. You are trying to conme between."

"I have not tried," she said faintly.

"But it is done all the same. I have known it in my heart all along—but I would not know. It was there from the first—inevitable."

"As inevitable as death," said Betty.

"And your going on means worse than death. It means—ruin!" said Carlyon, with his grey face of pain—"it is best to be plain—ruin of three persons, of yourself, of Harringay, of his wife. You shall not go on. Get your hat, and come with me. If you refuse, I will do this. I will go to Violet, and will tell her what your staying under this roof means to her. You can never be anything more to me now, Betty; but you are, and will be forever, the child that I loved. I will not stand idle and see the child that I loved go to destruction. Get your hat and come."

"I will," she said. "I swear it, Bill. But presently—in a day or two. You forget—no one knows but you and I—I myself. Would you have me reveal the whole story—to him, too—by flight? I have done nothing wrong—nor has he, that he should not be trusted. I will go with Violet and will stay a couple of nights; and then I will go away. I will go back to the Walker School and the old life—and work. And Violet will be safe and so will he. I promise, Bill. You can trust me?"

"I can trust you," he said—"but not him. Not

him for an instant with what is the light of another man's life—more precious—" his voice failed him, and for an instant he shut his teeth hard and turned away. Then he faced her again, the more resolute for the moment's weakness. "I will not trust Harringay for a second," he said. "Nor will I leave this house without you. Get your hat."

"I must see him to say good-bye. Afterward, I will do what you like."

"You must do it now."

"You do not trust me."

"I do not trust you with him."

She walked to the door and turned round upon him there with a face of hard defiance.

"All my life I have never lied to you," she said. "Even this thing about which other women would have lied I told you when you asked me because I thought you trusted me. Very well. Now you trust me no longer."

"You are not yourself; you are under an evil influence."

"I would have kept my promise. Now, you force me to play a part that is not only ungrateful but ridiculous—"

"I will see to that. I will take all the blame."

"Yes; you will take the blame, and you will remember why. Because you did not trust me."

He pulled out his watch, not looking at it, holding it in his hand, "How long will it take you to dress," he asked her with an irrepressible impatience. He felt that each minute he and she lingered in that house was an added torture.

"My clothes are already packed, and it will take me about five minutes to dress," she said.

Then she went.

He was feverishly impatient for her return. This was the feeling that occupied the foreground of his mind, driving all other pain out of sight for a while. Plenty of time for him to nurse his pain! All his long and empty life to do that in. At present there was Betty to put into safety. He walked up and down the room, played with the ornaments on mantelpiece and table, in the miserable fidgettiness of the soul's unrest. It seemed an age to him that he waited, but he held his watch in his hand and knew that the minutes which crept so slowly were very few.

When ten of them were past, he bethought him that he would see Violet and make what excuse he could for Betty's sudden departure. He looked for her in the room in which he had left her, and not finding her there, rang the bell to inquire for her.

His mistress was just leaving for the station the servant said, and even as the man spoke, Carlyon heard the wheels of the carriage which bore her away.

One obstacle removed, he said to himself. Carlyon waited another five minutes, and then walked into the hall to watch the stairs down which Betty must come. The servant who had answered his bell was loitering against the hall door, waiting to open it when it should please the visitor to go.

"Are you looking for anyone, sir?" he asked.

"For Miss Jervois. She knows that I am waiting."

"Miss Jervois left with my mistress some minutes ago, sir," the man said. "They are going on to the Broads for a few days, I believe, sir."

Carlyon turned away without a word. This was what had come of telling Betty Jervois he did not trust her!

CHAPTER XIV.

I HAD MY WAY.

It was on the third day from that which had witnessed his fruitless errand to Edmundsbury that the Reverend William Carlyon, walking, heavy-hearted through the sunshine on his parish rounds, was overtaken by a galloping pony dragging a noisy rattling cart which was pulled up alongside him. Pony-cart and driver were all well known to Carlyon. The latter was the proprietor of the little grocer shop at Crabberton, who, being his parishioner was privileged to make a good thing commercially out of his reverence. Bill himself was content to be the victim as well as the customer of all the local tradespeople.

In connection with the grocery stores there was a post and a telegraph office, and Bill knew at once that the dingy pink envelope Mr. Goggs held up to catch his attention was a telegram.

He thought also that he knew what it contained.

"You wasn't up to the house when I went, and I thought I'd come after you, quick as convanient—for I muchly fear 'tis ill news I ha' brought you," said Mr. Goggs, clambering down stiffly from the cart.

Carlyon stood like a rock. "Betty is dead," he said to himself.

The eager eyes of Mr. Goggs were fixed upon the parson's face. He would not lose a tremble of the finger, or the quiver of an eyelid. It would be expected of him to spare no detail in his recital of the story to his cronies.

Bill broke the envelope. "She is dead," he said. It was her drowned face he saw distinctly on the pink page before he read the words it contained. The worst that life held for him had happened. While he lived he would never know fear again.

"There has been an accident. Come at once."

He looked at the words for long, seeing them through that drowned white face as it were, before it became clear to his dazed brain that the message was sent in Betty Jervois's name, that, whoever was drowned, she, at least, was alive to tell the tale.

And the bearer of the telegram had seen nothing. "'Tis a bad job, I fear me, but the parson he kep' a still tongue," he said, waiting at the public house to lay out the tip which Bill had remembered to give him. "He's not one o' your high-minded ones as never let on to a chap, familiar-like—him and me's had many a mardle—but he never give out to-day. Maybe his heart's too full," said Mr. Goggs.

Carlyon was nearer to the rectory than to Queen Anne's when the messenger had overtaken him. He went in there at once, the pink paper fluttering in his hand which trembled wofully now—now that there was still something to live for, torment ahead, perhaps —now that Betty was alive.

"You must come with me," he said to Caroline. "We can't tell what it is, but it is disaster. She may not be able to leave at once, and a woman must be with her. You must come."

And Caroline, always prompt at the call of duty, went without demur.

There was a drive of four miles or so between the little country station at which, a couple of hours later,

they alighted, and the riverside inn from which Betty had sent her telegram. During that drive they learnt the extent of the misfortune which had befallen—not a detail of the budget collected and gloated over by the driver was spared them.

The whole party, Betty, Violet and Harringay, had been immersed. Harringay and Betty had been rescued in an exhausted condition. Violet had been drowned.

This had happened on the previous evening. The husband had stayed at a cottage near the scene of the disaster where the poor wife's body lay. The young lady had been moved, when sufficiently recovered, to the Ferry Inn, there being no accommodation for her at the cottage. On the morrow the "Inkwitch" was to be held at the cottage.

This, without its merciful brevity, was what Carlyon and his sister heard as they were carried along the country road, in sight, all the way, of the cruel river, to be deposited at the door of the Ferry Inn. They found Betty Jervois sitting in the inn parlor. It was late in the afternoon when they arrived, and she had pulled the curtain of red cotton over the small paned, wide seated window, to hide the river upon which, across a sloping, uncared for little plot of grass, the window looked. The light in the low ceilinged room was dim, therefore, and she sat in its duskiest corner. She did not rise when they entered. They walked toward her, across the brick floor, with its little mats of carpets placed unmeaningly upon the uneven surface, and she accepted passively the kiss which Caroline laid upon her cold and ashen cheek. Then she held out her hand to Bill, and looked up in his face.

"I had my way, you see," she said to him.

"Fresh from such a grievous tragedy, her self-possession is wonderful," Caroline said afterward to her brother.

But Carlyon knew that the last vestige of the Betty of old—the child who had played and wept and laughed, who had been naughty and adorable in her self-willed way, the last remnant even of her short, wilful, intractable, but still adorable girlhood had died out from Betty Jervois for ever.

There was no privacy to be had. The inn parlor was open to all the Ferry customers, and trade was a little brisker than usual, owing to the fact having circulated that one of the survivors of yesterday's tragedy was in the house. Old men came in who talked of angling, laid bets on the weight of the pike which had been taken; and on the weight of the pike which had broken away gave rein to their imagination.

Young men and women were there who talked of the yacht and the house-boat. And many curious glances were cast at the pale young woman with the dark red hair sitting so quietly in the corner.

Seeing this, Bill interposed, as far as was possible, his broad back between that loved form of hers and the gaze of the vulgar; and Caroline suggested that Betty and herself should retire to the privacy of a bedroom.

But Betty refused. "I am not ill," she said. "Why should I go to my bedroom? I will go for a walk with Bill if he will take me."

And they went, leaving Caroline shocked at the indecorousness of such a proceeding. "Has the girl, positively, no heart?" she asked herself. And many

times afterward she asked that question of Bill—who could have told her, perhaps. Such a small unusualness of procedure is sufficient to alienate the sympathies of a woman living by line and rule as did Caroline Jervois.

So, those two, in the growing dusk of the evening, walked up the straight level road where the river, running parallel, was hidden from them by tall hedges but where whiffs of its odor reached them continually on the wings of a warm, moist wind, blowing inward.

"I can't talk before Caroline," she said, "but you must be told about it."

"Would you rather?" he asked. "Think only of yourself, Betty; not of me."

"Haven't I always done that?" she asked him. "Isn't that why Violet is dead? It is because I think of myself I must tell you. I must tell you or die. All last night they kept me in bed, and a great woman, whom I hated, sat and looked at me, till I did not know where I was, or what I said. And once I felt that I had been saying the same thing over and over; and I could not remember what. And this morning I heard her telling the landlady that I had been all night calling for Bill and crying out that I wanted to tell him."

"Tell me then, dear," he said, and took her hand and pulled it through his arm.

But, after all, the task was beyond her. Coherently she could not tell him.

"I was always a brute to her, do you remember, Bill? Even long ago when I was a baby almost. I despised her for the sweetness and the gentleness you all praised, and I ill-used her to the best of my ability. She never retaliated, and I hated her

for that, too. She saved it all up to the finish. When she let herself drown instead of me, she took her revenge for it all, Bill."

"My dear, she loved you as we all do. Her revenge is the last thing she would have wished for."

"And that is what makes it perfect. You see how it is, Bill, don't you? I suppose I am not like other women—I saw Caroline's look of horror when I came out to walk. I can't cry and moan—I have not shed a tear—but my life has become hideous to me through her self-sacrifice. You know what a mighty good opinion I have always had of myself? I shall have to get through the rest of my existence with the knowledge that the woman whom in my heart I despised, envied, hated—oh, it is true! I am not raving! You had better let me take my hand away—did this thing for me. You see I loved her husband, Bill, I—you said it yourself—I tempted him to love me—"

Carlyon flung up the arm that held her hand to his side, "Oh, for God's sake, Betty!" he cried.

"It is true—it is all true, and she gave her life to save mine."

Her eyes were quite tearless, but she moaned as she spoke. No weeping of hers could have rent the man's heart like that sound from her lips—Betty's, whose happiness he had once been able to make with a word! He caught her hand again and held it clasped in his own.

"Look here!" he said with authority, "I will not listen to this. You must not dwell on it. It is exaggerated, morbid. Because Violet, in her death, was what she had been in life, unselfish, devoted, self-sacrificing, are you to make yourself wretched? Supposing that what she did, she did consciously, which, as

far as I can learn, appears doubtful, are you to thank her by counting the life she gave you—worthless?"

"It is worse than worthless. It is a hideous, horrible burden. Oh, has not she the best of it, Bill? Don't you think I would gladly be lying where she is? How gladly—how gladly—how gladly!"

Her voice died away on the wail of the words and she was silent. Bill knew that for the moment she was unconscious of him who walked at her side and held her hand, saw only the drowned woman upon her bed and the man that kept his watch near.

And in the silence that followed, many thoughts came to Bill. He thought of Violet—gentle uncomplaining, sweet—to whom the Fates had at length been kind, removing her from the path of a man who did not want her. He remembered how with her death, the obstacle to Betty's happiness—or what she would mistake for happiness—was removed. How, her present natural grief and horror past, she would come to recognize that Violet's death, instead of ruining her life, had made it. He thought of Harringay, false, self-indulgent, unscrupulous—he called him these things in his heart now, and gripping Betty's hand painfully, and set his teeth hard—of Harringay, catching at any happiness he coveted—that legitimately another man's for choice—ruining he cared not what lives and hearts, and souls, accepting the sacrifice of all that was fairest and most sacred to minister to his own pleasure and vanity—of Harringay holding Betty's fate in his grasp at last!

"I killed her, you know," Betty was saying to him. "It was no one's fault but mine. We went on the river the evening before—what ages ago it seems!—without her. She was afraid to be alone in a strange

place, and we left her alone—for hours. She asked me to stop with her the next evening, and I would not. So she came. She sat quite alone. No one spoke to her, and what we said she could not hear. And the excursion steamer passed—a hideous monster, crowded! She had not heard the sound of the music on board as we had done for long. When it passed her coming out of the mist she gave a cry, she was so timid on the water. And no one spoke to reassure her. Then the swell came. And she kept crying out and clinging to the side of the boat. And he called to her to sit straight—that it was all right."

Betty broke off, losing herself, back in the boat, rocking heavily on the water, hearing the irritable voice calling instructions to the frightened figure in the stern. She lived again through the horror of that moment, when Violet, bewildered and frightened, but hearing the sound of her husband's voice, got to her feet, and started, staggering, to go to him. "Sit down!" Harringay had thundered. She had heard him, but too late. Involuntarily he had started up to catch her as she fell, and there had been a rush of water, a crashing darkness—and Betty, mercifully stunned in the disaster, had known no more.

The steamer, unconscious of the ruin she had left in her rear, had passed on into the grey mists. Help, however, had come from another quarter. A man on the towing path who had seen the accident but could not swim, had run to the riverside cottage, where Violet now lay. With the help of the man who lived there, a boat had been rowed to the scene of the disaster.

But when succor came it was too late for one of the unfortunate three. Harringay, though all but ex-

hausted, had tried to keep afloat with the helpless burden of one unconscious woman; but the wife, who for a time clung to him, impeding his every movement, had of her own accord released her hold of him and perished.

"They say that you were for several minutes in the water. He showed great endurance," Bill said, forcing himself to bring out the unready words. "We owe him a debt of gratitude."

"There will be no paying of debts," Betty said, "I shall never see him again, I pray God. I wish he was not so near to-night. I wish that whole world might be placed between him and me. I wish I never might hear his name, or remember a word he has ever spoken, or see his face even in my dreams."

"I wish that too, Betty," Carlyon said, sickly, from his heart.

"I wish I might wipe out of my life every day with which he has had anything to do. Oh, Bill! To have my life a blank and no names written there but my little sister's and Peter's and yours! And yours, Bill —not his—not his—but yours!"

She tore her hand out of his at that and flung it before her eyes, and without more ado broke into wild and irrepressible weeping.

That night when Betty was in bed, at once worn out and calmed by her unrestrained tears, Bill Carlyon put on his hat and went out once more. He crossed the rank-growing untrimmed grass lying before the house and stood long by the river, lying placid under the starlight, lapping with a soft mysterious sound the green banks. To Carlyon, listening, its voice became articulate, and all that disjointed, incoherent story which Betty had told him, pieced out

with the details learned elsewhere, the river told him again as he walked by its shore.

Through its voice he heard the whispering voices of the man and woman in the boat drifting on the placid bosom of the river, their eyes on each others' face. The scant words—where no need of words was, dropping now and then through the murmur of the water.

Bill shut his ears to the revelations of the river song and turned his inward gaze to that slight, lonely figure in the stern of the boat. Poor Violet! In what a perpetual loneliness had her days been passed. He saw the sweet face with its anxious, listening air, the yearning sadness in the eyes, and that familiar look of the straining ear, the wistful anxiety to catch what her companions might be saying to each other. He thought of the trustful, gentle-natured girl whom he had loved in his youth—"Alas! poor Violet," he said, "to you at least the river has been kind!"

Walking along the river-bank he came in the course of a mile to that cottage which had been indicated to him, standing by itself in its melancholy plot of ground.

A faint light shone, riverward, from two of its windows. Carlyon put his long legs over the low hedge which divided the cottage garden from the fields on which it stood, and approached the first of these windows.

In the dimly illuminated room, bare and comfortless looking, with curtainless window, stained and mildewed walls, and scanty furniture of deal table and chairs, Harringay was sitting.

Carlyon glanced at the lonely figure, its back to him, with broad hunched shoulders, leaning forward

over the embers of the fire, and quickly turned away. He did not want to spy upon such a vigil as that.

In the next room, from which the light also streamed upon the rank growing herbage at his feet, Carlyon knew quite well what he would see. It was the room in which the inquest was to be held to-morrow.

The long table in the middle of the floor of fresh scrubbed bricks, the sharp outlines of the still form the sheet covered! Oh, Betty, Betty Jervois! Better that the width of a world should divide you from the man you love than that you should be brought nearer to him by this!

He waited till the door of the room slowly opened, till Harringay, with ashen, deathlike face, but with restless eyes, came into the chamber of death, came up to the dreadful table, and with hands clasped behind his back looked down upon the shrouded form.

Then, with that bitterness back in his heart, which the sight of the dead woman lying there in her loneliness had driven from it, Carlyon turned away.

When, a couple of hours later, he went slowly upstairs to the little chamber with the sloping ceiling and the slanting floor, and the mingled scent of mildew and of river, which had been allotted him, Caroline in her wrapper came out to him upon the landing.

"She is asleep," she said, "but she dreams continually of the accident, continually half-awakes herself and always calls upon your name."

"My name!" said Bill.

And Caroline, knowing of no cause of grief but

Violet's death, wondered at the tone, and at the havoc the hours had written plainly upon her brother's face.

"Considering how things are between you there is nothing surprising in that, I suppose," she said.

"Nothing, of course," said Bill. "If she wakes again tell her I am close at hand—and awake, will you, Caroline?"

END OF PART II.

PART III.

"Oh, say not ye that summer's over,
When birds within the rood stop singing!
While hands still touch in desperate clinging
Some ghost of hope in hearts must hover,
Though died the dream of loved and lover
While yet the marriage-bells were ringing.
Oh say not ye that summer's over
When birds within the wood stop singing!"

CHAPTER I.

"INEVITABLE AS DEATH."

It was the lunch hour at the Walker School.

Some score or so of boys and girls, women and men were standing about the big white stone entrance-hall, talking in groups, or sitting, with sandwiches in their laps, on the white stairs, or preparing in twos or threes to sally forth. This was the most important day of the year and the students were discussing a matter which was to each one of engrossing interest, the awarding of the Walker scholarship.

"She is the last I should have picked on," a girl leaning by the balusters said.

"The very last!" fell in a chorus from those around her.

"She is so full of mannerisms," an old young lady remarked. She had short hair and a flat bosom, and she stood in an uncomfortable pose against the wall with her hands clasped at the back of her head.

"It is her mannerism, that the professor encourages," some one answered.

"The professor encourages her a great deal too much," the old young lady replied.

"It isn't a failing of his! He don't encourage me," said with a laugh a short youth in eyeglasses with an upturned nose.

"Nor me! nor me!" cried the rest good-humoredly.

"He asked me to-day why I was not content to

stay at home and paint fuchsias," a delicate featured girl with a weak voice and a plaintive manner remarked, "I don't know what he meant. I haven't the least desire to paint fuchsias. I want to draw men and women."

"You heard what he said to that tow-headed girl with the squint, the other day in the antique room? You know how she fancies herself? She had done a discobulus—"

"She always does them! She fastened on that statue the first day she came and has never left it."

"Well, the professor has shirked her easel as much as possible, hitherto, but this morning, with an air of resignation enough to break your heart to contemplate, he sat down before it. He sat for long, and Towhead, standing behind him smirked and smiled, having excelled herself in the matter of smudging in her shadows —you know her way? Presently he sighed and looked up at Towhead. 'Can you sew?' he asked her in his tone of limp despair. She resented the insinuation, and hastily informed him that she couldn't. 'Then go home and learn to sew,' he said 'you will never learn to draw.'"

"The winner of the scholarship has neither a tow head nor a squint," remarked a big young man who sat on a table against the wall and swung his legs with his eyes fixed upon the staircase.

"Neither have I!" cried a pretty dark girl in a red painting apron, standing before him that he might see for himself if he desired, "and I can draw. But all I ever get from the professor is one of those prodigious sighs, and a resigned 'Go on. Well—go on.'"

"He is a darling all the same," cried half a dozen young voices in chorus.

"But he has made a mistake about the scholarship," said the old young lady.

"He never makes mistakes!" again in chorus.

"I like Betty Jervois," said the pretty girl in the red pinafore. "She isn't always agreeable, but she is the handsomest girl in the Walker, and there's some of us take a lot of beating. She mayn't have deserved the scholarship, but I'm glad she's got it."

"Here she comes," said the young man on the table, and ceased to swing his legs.

Betty Jervois, hatted and cloaked, came down the wide stairs, intent, apparently, on the buttoning of her gloves. One or two of the girls, busy with their sandwiches, looked up at her, and let her pass in silence. Another twitched the skirt of her dress as she went by with a smiling "Well done! I'm glad, Betty!" The young man on the table softly clapped his hands: and presently they were all clapping.

Betty looked up at that, and laughed, and kissed the hand that was not gloved, impartially, to them all.

"You're all awfully good," she said as she reached the hall. "In your places I should be so savage! As for myself, I never was so surprised in my life. I thought my attempt was fairly good till I saw the others sent in. Then, honestly, I decided mine was the worst there."

"Ah! If you'd told me that I could have promised you, you were all right," said the young man now standing before the table, "I've never won a thing yet that I haven't been sure as death I hadn't a chance of."

And they listened to him with respect, for they all knew he had won everything he had gone in for.

He followed Betty Jervois out of the big doors and

under the Grecian portico and caught her up on the weather-blackened steps that ran the entire length of the building. Their ways lay together as far as the house in which Betty Jervois, with several of the art students, boarded. On the days he worked at the Walker School he always walked to and from the school at her side. He was that Johnson who had been a friend of Peter's, and with whom Betty had once talked of sharing a flat.

"I feel such a fraud," she said, as she walked at his side across the big courtyard, past the porter's lodge and through the iron gates into that melancholy, deserted street in which the Art School is situated. "I don't believe I deserve what I've got one bit."

"Nonsense!" he said reassuringly. "There was no one in it for a second but you and that poor deformed girl. All the rest were nowhere."

"I wish she'd had it. I feel as if I'd cheated her. I told the professor so this morning. I said if it was such a near thing it ought to have been given to her."

"The professor naturally asked why?"

"I meant because of her back, poor thing! but I didn't like to say it. I said because she had nothing but her art."

"And you, I suppose, have everything, Miss Jervois?" Johnson inquired with a sigh.

"Of course he snubbed me. He reminded me that the committee did not sit for the purpose of judging the private histories of students but their work."

"Didn't he tell you it was cheek in you to sit in judgment on the verdict of the committee?"

"Imagine the professor applying such an epithet to the conduct of a lady!"

"That's for me, I suppose? You must consider

me a poor spirited sort of fellow to be always dangling at your heels, spite of the nasty knocks you give me."

"'Nasty knocks!' To be inured to the rough-and-ready give and take of student life, and to gibe at my mild little sarcasms!"

"The worst is, I know well I'm not the only one."

"The only 'dangler at my heels?' If you mean by that you are not the only man who walks home with me to Stanfield Gardens, you are making a misstatement, for you certainly are."

"On my off-days you walk alone?"

"Nearly always."

"I am more than grateful for my privilege, Miss Jervois."

Once or twice as they had talked, he had turned his head to look behind him. "Why do you do that?" she asked him presently.

"You didn't see that man in a blue great-coat that was waiting against the gates as we came through? I felt half inclined to ask him what he was staring at, that's all. Another conquest, you see. I thought I saw him following us."

"If you keep turning round to look for him, he probably will. How foolish you are about some things, Mr. Johnson, although you are so clever with your pencil!"

"About what, for instance?"

"My 'conquests!' How absurd! They are all in your imagination. I know of none."

"You know of one. Come, Betty! You know you finished me off long and long ago. Peter knew it."

"I know you say so."

"Is it any use?—that's what I want to make out.

Will it ever come to anything more than my walking home from the school three days a week with you?"

"Never. You can't be in any doubt about it, Harry. I've told you so, a dozen times."

"I dare say you'll have to tell me a dozen times more, but I shall hang on still," he said with melancholy fervor.

She laughed: "You are very foolish. Not that, perhaps, it hurts you. If I thought I did I should cut you for the future. But you can't think I don't know my own mind? I am not, you see, an inexperienced girl—I have lived through my history—such as it was—and done with it."

"In that year you were away? I always knew there was something. Oh, I read you like a book, Betty—I knew there was something. Sometimes I've been so sick and savage I've felt inclined to fling down my infernal—I beg your pardon—my brush, and go to the devil, as better fellows and better painters have done. And then again, I think that way I should lose you altogether, for I shouldn't be fit to speak to you. And so, while you aren't married, or engaged to be married—"

"As I never shall be—I have told you."

"I am fool enough to hang on."

"And if—knowing all—you are fool enough, it won't hurt you. Here we are at No. 7. Good-bye."

"You are coming to the *conversazione* to-night, perhaps?"

She had nodded to him and turned to mount the steps of the house when he made a quick step after her.

"Don't look round," he said. "It is as I thought—that fellow is following you. Impertinent brute!"

She made a gesture of indifference, ran lightly up the steps and disappeared.

"The silly boy!" she said, and smiled a little sadly to herself as she crossed the hall. "But it is better for him to make himself foolish over a harmless, self-respecting woman such as I am than to racket about as the rest do. If it were Peter I would rather have it so. Poor Peter! I wish Peter and I were together again in our darling little flat next the sky! I must write to him about the prize. I must write to Bill, too. They will think it such a triumph for me, remembering how my soul once hungered after such distinctions! I shan't tell them how flat I feel about it, how stale and unprofitable everything is."

She had been about to enter one of the rooms which opened into the spacious hall, but she paused with her hand on the door as if lacking the energy to proceed, and her figure drooped:

"Oh, how useless everything is!" she sighed. "How senseless!"

She drew a long breath and pushed open the door. The dining-room was empty at present, the table laid for lunch. Betty walked to the window, listlessly pulled the curtain on one side, and stood there, looking out upon the dreary plane trees in the garden opposite.

A man in a blue great-coat passing slowly by the area railings, turned an attentive face upon the house. When he had passed he retraced his steps and passed again, and this time his eyes caught the eyes of the girl looking out.

Betty dropped the curtain and started back into the room, stood there motionless, hardly seeming to breathe, till into an ashen face the blood came rushing

again, and the heart that had seemed to stand still bounded on into furious beating. She could not have said as she stood there wrapt in that moment of intensest emotion if what she felt was simply exquisite pain, or joy so vivid as to be a kind of pain. She only knew that here was life—life—life once again, and Betty Jervois had existed as one in the torpor of death.

When the other inmates—all of them students of something or another—came trooping into the dining-room, Betty went upstairs to take off her hat. She stood for minutes lost in feeling rather than thought, trying exactly to recall the vision which had so disturbed her. All that her consciousness had retained was the flash of the eyes as her own had fallen upon them, the narrow, pale gray eyes so curiously full of light.

He had come back, the man whom she had vowed to herself and to Bill Carlyon that she would, God helping her, never see again. The man who would never give her that chance, to whom the sight of her must be hateful, who had hastened to put half a world between himself and herself, who, she had never wearied of telling herself, would never, never, while time lasted, come back any more. He had come, and she was filled with a tumultuous, painful gladness, which gradually, as remembrance regained its ascendancy over feeling, died down in her heart, leaving it empty, cold and sad.

He had come: and that he would certainly seek to meet her, she, being a fairly honest person, did not pretend to doubt. She was afire with excitement to think he would certainly come, and ice at the recalling of what must be her course.

"I long—I long to see him!" throbbed her heart. "I must not, I must not," preached her conscience.

She would not go down to lunch to hear the talk of the *conversazione* to which most of the students were going that evening, to sit through the comments on the awarding of the Scholarship—how long ago it seemed! She pulled her cloak warmly about her, and sat down on her bed, and tried to get the mastery of her own thoughts, and to subdue that tempest of feeling which surged within her.

Presently she got up and unlocked a box which had lain within another at the bed's foot. It was there that were hid the few treasures from which she never parted. These were the contents of the drawer her father had confided to her care. Some small belongings which had been Ian's had crept in among them: a portrait of the child which Betty had long ago drawn from memory; an elementary representation of Paul, the kitten, dating back to schoolroom days.

It was not at these mementoes Betty looked now. She put them with reverent touch on one side, and presently drew out a Bible. The Book was old in point of age, but not, alas, much fingered. It was one which Violet Belton had given her on a long ago birthday; a gift acknowledged without enthusiasm by the recipient, who had desired a collar for Mr. Chipling instead. Within its pages she had hidden away an unmounted photograph of Mrs. Harringay which Violet had also given her on her last ill-omened visit. Since the catastrophe with which that visit had concluded Betty had feared to look upon this representation of the dead cousin. The shrinking she had felt was intensified to-day an hundredfold; but she constrained herself.

The placid, gentle face smiled up at her from between the sacred leaves with its wistful, strained expression. Betty gripped the Bible in a tighter clasp and stared, her first aversion past, as if fascinated into the pictured eyes. And as she looked, and as she clasped the Book the tumult died down within her, the world grew steady about her feet, her mental vision cleared.

Then the door bell rang.

Betty started to her feet. Running downstairs she intercepted the servant as she crossed the hall: "If that is someone for me I am not at home," she said.

While the outer door was opened she darted within the nearest room and stood there, unconsciously folding the Bible and its enclosure against her breast, straining her ears to catch the tones of the voice that spoke.

It was her name that she heard—she had known it would be so—and pronounced in the familiar tones—the tones that held the power to play upon Betty Jervois's heart as the master-hand upon the harp strings.

She gave a smothered cry, like a gasp for breath as she heard them, and darted forward—too late. The door was shut upon Harringay's retreating figure, and Betty stood, staring blankly upon it, with Violet's picture, which had fluttered unperceived to the ground, smiling up at her from her feet.

CHAPTER II.

THE WALKER CONVERSAZIONE.

THE Walker Art School was in festival. The cold stone stairs had put on their gala attire of red felt; the white bareness of hall and corridors was hidden by tall palms, and ferns, and azaleas in bloom; in the Antique Room the statues stood out, pure and cold and white, from their background of dark drapery and bright flowers.

By the side of now one, now another, distinguished visitor, among the two or three hundred guests the professor moved about, favoring with an especial smile of welcome his own pupils, who, denuded of their artist's blouses, and transfigured in their becoming evening dresses he had some trouble in recognizing.

"Upon my word, Greene," he said to one of the subordinate masters, "this bevy of pretty women makes me nervous. Out of their regulation attire one recognizes with reminiscent qualms that they are on the same plane as one's self and not so many schoolgirls to snub, and scold, and sit upon. I hope I shall have recovered from this impression in the morning or my courage will be sapped and my usefulness annihilated. I shall be caught saying civil things to incapacity and encouraging mediocrity, Greene."

"If you begin to treat them civilly your popularity

is lost," Greene said, "It is because I am careful not to hurt their feelings that my opinions are considered of no value. Look at this!" as a group of dainty looking girls came by, bowing and smiling at the professor, and kindling into fresh smiles and blushes at the great man's bow. "Perhaps in your own interests and those of the Walker School I ought to warn you against the ladies most fatally equipped for wounding the susceptible heart. For instance, that Miss Jervois is looking particularly handsome to-night."

"Ah! Where is she? I think I'll run the risk," the professor said.

He made his way, when she was pointed out to him, to where Betty, momentarily isolated from the group of which she had formed one, sat alone on the crimson draped pedestal of the Dancing Fawn. She was sitting, elbow on knee, chin propped in hand, leaning forward, gazing out across the crowd of people who filled the room as if she saw nothing of them, nor was conscious of her own whereabout. Her black dress of silk muslin threw into relief the whiteness of her arms and neck. She wore her warm red hair massed low upon her neck, and she wore no other ornament. Her appearance had lost its girlishness, the cheeks were less rounded, the lips had set themselves in firmer curves, her gaze was serious—all its talent, fun and roguishness, which had long survived her childhood, gone. Her vitality appeared lower. Yet it seemed to-night that she had lost these things without the loss of beauty.

She dropped the chin-supporting arm as the professor approached, and leaning back against the Fawn looked up at him.

"I have been showing your picture this evening to

a friend of mine who tells me he is also a friend of yours, Miss Jervois," the professor said.

(" The unextinguishable Johnson," said Betty by way of explanation to herself).

" He said some very complimentary things about your work; and some others which I should have liked you to hear."

" Not so complimentary, I suppose?" said Betty with her smile.

" I won't say that," said the professor, with a deprecatory shake of the head. " His opinion is worth having, of course, and that is why I mention it. You know of whom I speak? Edward Harringay. He agrees with me for instance that the pose of the central figure—"

But here with a hurried, " Excuse me for a moment," the professor suddenly turned away, his eyes having lit upon the face of a newcomer, a star of great magnitude in the artistic world.

Betty Jervois sat as he had left her with whitened lips. If he was here then the matter was out of her hands—how could she help seeing him? It would be by no voluntary act that her vow would be broken. Her eyes full of fear and eagerness roved over the crowd. Then Johnson came and stood before her.

" Why were you so late in coming?" he asked, " I had almost given you up. I have been standing in the Bone Room by your picture, listening to the remarks of the fools who stopped to look at it. You would not always have been gratified."

" I suppose not."

" Yet it has attracted more comment of one sort or another than anything else here. I have been very proud of you."

She smiled vaguely, wishing he would get out of the way and not impede her watch upon the crowd. "Nonsense, Harry," she said.

"I'll tell you someone else who is proud of you—you won't be so indifferent. The professor."

He paused to watch the effect of the electrifying announcement.

"Oh, nonsense!" said Betty again, with the former unmeaning smile.

"But I heard what he said! He was talking, by the way, to that very man I told you of—the fellow I thought followed us home this morning. He appears to know what he is talking about, and I could see he was mightily impressed by your picture. I wanted to point him out to you; but he left before you came."

"Are you certain of that?"

"Quite. But I can tell you what he said. Come into the Bone Room."

"Look—there is Amy Masters coming in. Go and bring her to me and we will all go together."

But when he left her she rose at once to her feet and made her way hurriedly to the room where the pictures for the scholarship competition had been temporarily hung. The groups of people among whom she passed looked with some surprise at the handsome young woman who moved amid the purposeless throng with such eager purpose in her face. At the moment Betty was not even conscious of them. Her whole being was filled with the thought that Harringay had seen her picture, had lingered by it, speaking of it and of her.

He was gone! After all she could keep her word! But she could also stand where he had stood, she

could try to see her picture with his eyes, it would never, never seem worthless to her any more to imagine what his thoughts had been as he had looked at it.

Small knots of people had gathered before each of the pictures, not in most cases with any view of discussing those ambitious efforts, but simply as natural resting places in an aimless progress through the room. The little group of people before Betty's "Hereward" had turned their backs upon the prize-drawing, the outcome of unremitting labor to its author, the cause to others of such heart-burning and bitter disappointment. By the fragments of conversation she caught, it was evident to Betty that they were not discussing the merits or otherwise of her central pose, but were laughing over the adventures of a tall young man who had been driven to the Art School by a tipsy cabman. The unfortunate fare, it appeared, had been taken half over London before being at length deposited at his desired destination, and he had refused to pay for the unnecessary length of the drive.

"If you'd said you was a bloomin' schoolboy I should ha' knowed where you wanted to be took," the Jehu had called after the retreating form of the young man as he had mounted the steps of the Walker School.

The tall young man told the story with great dramatic power, and was rewarded by appreciative laughter by the girls who listened.

"Will you allow me?" Betty said, and the group moved on a few steps, and she planted herself before her picture.

She had thought of it, dreamed of it, worked upon

it for weeks, but it seemed to her as if she had never really seen it before. Those deep eyes of hers, eager, and filled with unwonted light, seemed to devour each detail. Had he been pleased, surprised, disappointed, or had he, perhaps, seen nothing of the picture, but only herself who had painted it—the woman from whom a tragedy divided him?

If those chattering people would but move on, and leave her in peace! She felt that she could never tire of the images her own picture, Harringay standing before it, evoked.

But encouraged by the laughter of the girls, the tall young man with the turn for narrative had embarked on another story. Betty strove not to listen, yet ever found the current of her own thought disturbed by the recital, fragments of which floated, in spite of herself upon her mental consciousness. It was a question again of the London cabman of whom in his several varieties the narrator declared himself to be a careful student. He was, at all events, a most accomplished mimic, the girls declared, and encouraged him to further efforts, as he now bent his ear to the trapdoor of his hansom, listening with an angry puzzlement to the instructions of his fare, now looked up with the anxious gaze of the foreigner inside, repeating in his broken English,

"To ze Ompere—to ze Ompee-r-r-r!" Then breaking in desperation into his native tongue, "A l'Empire."

"Olympia," cried the young man in the person of cabby, and demanded why, in the name of several wicked things which had to be omitted in the presence of ladies, his fare had not said so before?

Betty mentally apostrophized the young man and

his admiring friends as a set of chattering idiots, but they had done her the unconscious service of forming a barrier between her as she stood before her picture and the passing crowd. As the trapdoor was banged down and the poor Frenchman was driven away by an exasperated cabmen in the direction of Addison Road, someone with a word of apology made his way through this barrier and stood beside Betty Jervois.

Without moving her eyes in his direction she knew who it was. She was ashamed of the cowardice which had robbed her of power to move or speak or look when Harringay's unmoved voice fell on her ear.

"You did not expect to see me here;" he said, "but I made sure of meeting you."

Then she turned a little, and, still without looking in his face, gave him her hand.

"I congratulate you on your 'Hereward,'" he went on in his usual, level voice, "I agree with Professor Scott that it shows great promise."

And without more ado he proceeded to talk to her about the picture, praising it, censuring it, as if it were a work in which he had only the critic's interest.

And gradually Betty's courage came back to her and her power of self-control. She found voice to oppose his arguments, to question his opinions, even to assert her own. Soon she turned her eyes from the picture upon which they had been desperately glued, and looked him in the face. His own gaze met hers fully for a space before it returned to the "Hereward." They talked on upon the same subject still, but Betty talked at random now, and only with her lips. Her mind was occupied with the face, which, while the faces of the rest of the world had passed before her

eyes to admire, to deride, to reject, to approve, had in some mysterious way lived within her, unquestioned, uncatalogued, uncriticised, from her childhood.

The fifteen months that had passed since she had seen it last had dealt not too kindly with the countenance that little Betty Jervois had so innocently enshrined. The lines about mouth and eyes had multiplied and were deeper cut; into the sweep of black hair had come more than a touch of grey; the always swarthy complexion had been rendered duskier by the sunlight and darkness of many lands. And over all was the unmistakable air of sadness and regret that comes with the knowledge of life, the knowledge of men and women, that is, the experience of the wisdom and folly of the world. The passion of pursuit and the wearisomeness of attainment; the sadness of experience and its composure, were all written plain for who liked to see in the lines of Harringay's face.

When Harringay had delivered himself of what had to be said on the disputed subject of the pose of Betty's "Hereward" in his white silk shirt passing on horseback under the window beneath Torfreda's eyes, the pair moved away from the picture and found themselves a seat in the Life Room where the band was stationed. On their way they passed Johnson distressfully searching for his lost—mistress, with Amy Masters in tow. His mouth fell open when he saw Betty in conversation with his morning's *bête noir*, and he raised his eyebrows in pantomimic interrogation. Did she want to be rescued? Was she being annoyed? Could he do anything the arched brows, the eager eyes and parted lips demanded. Betty, listening to the familiar, gentle voice beside her,

gazed unseeing in the poor fellow's face and passed on.

"I called on you this afternoon and you were out," Harringay said as they seated themselves on one of the crimson settees which had been imported into the "Life," and Betty let the remark pass without comment.

He had not sought to lead her into the semi-privacy to be obtained in corridors or on the stairs, his manner was simply that of any gentleman talking to any lady of his acquaintance from whom he had been separated by ordinary circumstances for a period. Betty noted these things and was ashamed of that foolish tumult which had been in her heart. She was disgusted to remember that the vow she had taken never to see him again had been made under the impression that their meeting would be simply the preliminary to the establishment between them of relations which would be a wrong to the memory of his dead wife. This impression she saw at once had arisen from a ridiculously exaggerated idea of the strength of the man's feeling for her—gauged, fool that she had been!—by the strength of her own for him! That she had been so mistaken was a thing for which to be grateful. Betty's gratitude was about as deep as that of other women in like cases, and showed itself in a great accession of cold and calm of manner, in a lifted face and eyes that seemed to look down on her companion and his subject whatever it might be.

Harringay was unmoved if he noticed the change, and his even tones flowed on. He told her a little of his travels, he criticised, but listlessly, with nothing of his old malice, the passing throng, he gently anathematized the band. He questioned her as to her

brother Peter, telling her that he had at one time thought of going to the Upper Congo where the young man was temporarily settled to give him a look, but, at the last moment, had decided to come to London instead.

"Peter has sent home a great cargo of butterflies, and horrid-looking spiders, and huge nameless things which I am to get for him and to sell," Betty told him. "How am I to do that, I wonder?"

"Perhaps I could help you if you would allow me." Then he repeated his first remark, "I called on you this afternoon. Did you know it?"

"Yes," said Betty with an appearance of perfect calm.

"You were, unfortunately, out."

"Yes," said Betty again.

He turned to look at her then, and recognized the fact that the handsome set face beside him was not that of an emotional girl to change color for the telling of the harmless, necessary lie.

"But I suppose you are—sometimes—at home when your friends call?"

"Certainly."

"And am I permitted to try my luck again?"

"Why not?"

"Perhaps you would tell me when I should be most likely to find you in."

Betty reflected. Here was her opportunity to say "Never." Yet, where was the necessity now to do so?

"I am at the Walker all day, of course."

"All Saturday?"

"Not all Saturday. We generally go off to a concert or a matinée on Saturday afternoon."

"To-morrow is Saturday. Are you going then to a matinée or a concert?"

Betty slowly shook her head.

"I may come then? Thanks. I will bring the address of a lady who will undertake Peter's butterflies for you. By the way, how is it you did not go to Paris? I heard that you were going there. You would have done well to go."

"Mr. Carlyon wished me to stay in London," Betty said. She did not add that it was the discovery that Harringay himself had started in the first instance for Paris which had influenced her own destination.

"Is Carlyon well?" he asked, his smooth tones grown listless and weary.

When Betty had heard from him that morning he had been quite well, she told him, "Caroline and her crew are living with him," she added and he did not appear surprised.

"Poor Carlyon must always be the victim," he said. "He would not be happy else."

"He is the best man who ever lived on earth!" cried Betty with sudden warmth, her eyes gleaming.

Harringay acquiesced with perfect calm: "I remember you and I often told each other so," he said.

Something in the tone startled Betty out of the moment's lethargy. It recalled to her how he and she had shown their appreciation of Carlyon's goodness. The whole history of their relations with each other rushed upon her with its ancient force. It was impossible that they two should sit there, side by side, in black silk muslin and swallow-tail coat, listening to selections from *Cavallaria Rusticana* like any ordinary man and woman between whom no recollection of betrayed affection, of faithless friendship, of

wounded love lay; no persistent ghost of a drowned disfigured face. A horror of herself, that she could endure his neighborhood so calmly, seized on Betty. She got up abruptly from her seat.

"There are some people who have been looking for me," she said. "I think I must go to them now. I shall see you again, perhaps."

"Perhaps," said Harringay gently as she moved away.

"He was a friend of yours, then, after all?" Johnson said, jealously, as she joined him. "Why couldn't he have come forward and said so, then, instead of slinking at our heels? Andrews has been telling me about him. His wife was drowned under his eyes a week or so ago. Did you know that?"

"I knew that," said Betty.

"An experience that might have kept him quiet for a time one would think! Andrews says he meant to save his wife and grabbed the very wrong woman. An awful idea! By heaven! If that had happened to me I should have had about as much as I wanted. I shouldn't have come grimacing and chattering to a pack of other women, wearying them to death with my yarns! You look about worn out, Betty."

"Yes. I want to get home. No—you can't come with me. Get me a hansom, please."

And the faithful Johnson obeying, Betty was whirled away from the gay scene of the Walker Conversazione.

CHAPTER III.

A WOMAN'S NO.

THE long drawing-room at Stanfield Gardens was empty save for the presence of one of the boarders, a young lady with a red inflamed face, and watery eyes, who, wrapped in a knitted shawl and with wool mittens on her hands, was nursing a phenomenal cold over the fire. This young person, on the appearance of a visitor, lifted her face from her pocket-handkerchief, inclined her heavy head in response to the newcomer's bow, said, "Good afterdood," and, turning her back on him to show that she was in no wise interested in his presence, dropped her face again in her pocket-handkerchief.

Harringay took up his position at the window—there were three of them—farthest from the fire, and there Betty Jervois presently joined him.

He had brought the address he promised her; and their talk was of butterflies, and of Peter's letters from the Congo. Probably not a sentence of this simple converse penetrated the heavy ears of the young lady with the cold, but both felt that her presence was more restraint than the presence of the crowd last night

"Is this all the privacy you can command?" Harringay asked presently, looking with no good-will at the muffled back.

And Betty replied that she had no secrets to dis-

cuss, and did not find the presence of a third person inconvenient.

"You have become very patient," Harringay said. "Come outside."

Betty declined. "We can talk here."

"We cannot. That," with a glance of malice at the figure by the hearth, agitated now by a violent and prolonged fit of sneezing, "forbids. Come out."

"No."

"Are you afraid?" he asked with his eyes upon her. "You did not use to be afraid."

She might have made answer: "Of you I was always afraid," but she was silent, trying to overcome the desire to do as he asked, to resist the longing to be alone with him. The sick girl sank back in her chair with a gasp and a sigh, exhausted by her sneezing bout. Betty walked slowly down the room and went on her knees at the invalid's side.

"Your cold seems worse, Nora," she said. "Can I do anything for you? Get you anything?"

Nora muttered and spluttered in her effort to reply, and finally got out that if Betty would go to the chebists at the corder, get her a couple of oudces of ipecacuadha ad borphia lozedges and a tid of bustard plaster for her chest she thought it might be of service to her.

"All right. I will go and fetch them," Betty said. She had made up her mind not to go out—nearly. It was wonderful how Fate took things out of our hands and decided them for us, Betty told herself, as she rose to her feet and crossed the room. She nodded to Harringay as she reached the door. "I am compelled to go out. I shall be ready almost directly," she said.

They went out of the door, and down the three white steps, and crossed the road to the leafless shade of the melancholy planes of the Gardens. Round and round the enclosure they walked, and for long they walked without talking. It was Harringay who broke the silence, and the preliminary to speech was a heavy sigh.

"Betty," he said, "I am going out to Africa in a month. I was there a dozen years ago for a short time and the fancy has taken me to see what civilization has done for the places I knew in the rough. I shall look up Peter, perhaps. Probably I shall settle there for a time. In any case it is unlikely that I come back to England for years—perhaps ever again."

He was silent and she listened to his footsteps as he walked beside her.

"I want you to come with me, Betty," he said.

She half stopped, gave a quick look at his face, hurried on again at his side: "Oh no!" she said.

"Why do you say that," he asked her gently, "you do not mean it. Let other men and women deal in affectation and evasion, you and I should not be afraid to speak our minds to each other. We have known them too long."

"Yes," said Betty slowly, "That is just it."

"I have not unduly hurried. I went away for fifteen months. But at no instant of that time have I doubted what your answer would be, when the proprieties being appeased—not for your sake or mine, but for another's to whom such things were of importance—I came to you. Why do you say 'oh no?'"

Betty hurried on, her breathing quick and deep.

She was for the moment incapable of answering him. Yet, was it possible he did not see the inseparable objection to that blessedness of which he spoke. Was it possible it could be of no importance in his sight and remain insuperable in hers?

He turned his face upon her and smiled a little as he put his question for the third time: "Why do you say 'Oh, no?'"

She stopped in her walk, and feeling hurriedly in her jacket pocket brought out that unmounted speaking photograph of the dead woman. When she had finished dressing and was on her way down to him, she had run back to her room, had hurriedly searched through the pages of her Bible and secured the picture. It was to serve as a talisman to guard her against herself and against him. She thrust it into his hand;

"Because of this," she said.

The light of the November afternoon had grown a little uncertain, although the dusk was not yet falling. Harringay knit his brows and peered closely at the photograph, then pushed it back into the envelope from which it had been drawn and returned it to her hand.

"My late wife. Dead for fifteen months," he said.

"But how dead?" Betty asked with a break of excitement in her voice. "It was through us—you and me—for our selfish gratification she died. And—all that went before. She was good to me, and I—if it had not been for me she would have been alive now. Every day of my life since—every day—every hour—I have wished that you had saved her—that it was I who was drowned."

"This is morbid," he said. "You used to be peculiarly healthy-minded—quite sane. What is it that has changed you so?"

"Oh, dear God!" she said breathing the words under her breath. "Have we not had enough to change us—you and I?"

He caught strongly in his the hand that hung at her side.

"Oh, Betty! I have had such faith in you—can't you spare me this?" he asked.

The few persons in that quiet place were on the side of the houses; there was none to trouble about the man and woman who walked by the tall rails of the gardens with closely locked hands.

"I don't think I ought to spare you—we ought not to spare ourselves. Happiness won at the cost of—her life! It couldn't be happiness."

"Perhaps not," he said, "I have not many illusions on the subject of happiness. It is not happiness I am asking you to give me, but yourself."

"But you and I are not the only persons to be thought of. There is Bill."

He smiled indulgently as he looked at her.

"Is there still Bill?" he asked. "Well, there was always Bill, you remember, but he used not to be of much account."

"Oh, I know—I know!" acquiesced Betty with remorse.

"And you see," he went on with a swift change of tone, "you belong to me. If you were tied fifty times over to Carlyon I should not hesitate to take you away from him. I don't doubt my right to do so or my power. Neither do you doubt it."

"I thought all this would have changed you," she

said. "Oh, how wicked you must be!" but she still clung tightly to his hand.

"Betty!" he said and bent closer to her and dropped his voice to its lowest tone. "There was a time, when with every consideration to divide us—and the laws of God and man—you would have come to me if I had but lifted my finger. Isn't it so?"

She hung her head and seemed to catch her breath but made no other answer.

"You have called me wicked," he whispered on, "but at anyrate I was not so wicked that I did not consider you before myself. Do you suppose that for an instant anything else would have weighed with me then—what the world said—what others claimed of me? But I knew you well. And I knew not only what you would dare but how you would suffer—and I refrained. But now—now when both of us are absolutely free—when nothing stands between—!"

She gave a little gasping cry, "Oh!" she said, "is it possible you don't see how much stands between? You are right. I would have done that—what you say. I cared for nothing in comparison with you—nothing! I was mad. But even in my madness I knew it was I who should have to pay. But for *this* no one would have to pay—no one but—" her voice sank to its lowest whisper—"Violet."

He made an impatient sound and dropped her hand. "Which fate do you suppose Violet would have chosen," he asked her with anger, "the one you would have meted out to her or the one which befell?"

They had reached, for the third time in their walk, the spot which was opposite number 7, the students' boarding-house, and here they came to a stop. No tears were in Betty's eyes, but she shuddered strongly

and drew her breath as if she were sobbing in a tearless agony.

"I can't make you understand—but I understand," she said brokenly. "I see how impossible it is. She is the victim—she is the victim! I will not take a happiness that was bought by her life. I will not."

She turned abruptly from him. When he put out his hand to stop her she eluded his grasp: "I will not," she repeated with a sob. "Never! I will not!" and so slipped away from him across the road and in another minute had disappeared within the house.

Harringay turned quickly on his heel and walked away. But gradually his pace slackened, he stopped as if to retrace his steps, then walked slowly on again, pausing often, and looking back. At a chemist's shop which marked the corner made by an intersecting street he waited long, entered finally, and made some purchases there, then walking briskly, went back to number seven Stanfield Gardens.

To his inquiry for Miss Jervois he was told that the young ladies were now all in the drawing-room taking tea.

He declined to reënter the drawing-room. "Tell Miss Jervois I will not detain her for a minute. I will step in here and await her," he said as the servant pushed open a door through which a faint glimmer of fire-light came.

It was the dining-room he entered. Harringay turned his back upon the long table upon which the white tablecloth which had served for the students' lunch still lingered awaiting the students' dinner, and took up his position on the hearth-rug, looking down

upon the smouldering fire. The large room with its heavy cornices and olive green walls was all but in darkness. Harringay idly stirred the fire with his boot, and a tiny flame upspringing shone fitfully on the long table surrounded by its twenty vacant chairs, on the heavy gold frames of some oil paintings upon the walls, on Harringay's own dark and serious face. It might have revealed to him had he turned his head the figure of a woman, hatted and cloaked, who, standing in one of the windows, watched him with eyes drowned in tears. But the man was engrossed with his own thoughts and did not trouble himself about his surroundings.

The servant came back. "I was mistaken, sir. Miss Jervois is not in the drawing-room. I do not think she can have come in yet."

"I am in no hurry. When Miss Jervois returns will you tell her that I am waiting here."

The parlor-maid departed. The man, standing before the fire, drooped his head with a patient air of waiting.

It was a full house at that hour. Now and again a light foot was heard upon the stair; now and again a door would open, and a girlish voice, raised in talk or laughter, would fall upon the ear. At such times Harringay would lift his head, a look of alert expectation would animate his figure, his eyes would turn eagerly to the closed door. When the footsteps would cease, and the voices die away he turned back again to the fire and resumed his dogged waiting. In one hand he held those little parcels he had bought at the chemist's, the other clasped the high marble shelf of the mantelpiece. He uttered no sound of impatience or disappointment or weariness; but in the

pose of the solitary figure shown fitfully in the firelight in the head, now lifted in expectation, now hanging in patient waiting, in the tension of the hand that grasped the mantle-shelf even, there was, in the eyes of the one who looked on, an eloquence all its own.

Memory is full of caprice and renders no account of her selections. The time came in the life of Betty Jervois when of all her recollections of the man she loved, this one most persistently recurred to her mind. A picture which never grew indistinct or blurred, no matter how fast her tears fell upon it—the picture of Harringay standing in the firelit dusk, patiently awaiting her coming. The sorrow she had hidden there to master before she faced the other inmates of the house, rose, climbing in her throat. She could no longer strangle noiselessly the struggling grief. At the least sound from her he swiftly turned his head, and she came slowly forward.

"Have you been there all along?" he asked.

He flung the little parcels on the table. "You forgot your chemist's order," he said. "The 'Ipecacuadha' is there and the 'bustard' plaster."

Then, as she stood beside him, with the flickering fire-light on her tear-disfigured face, he put his arm about her shoulders: "It is no good, is it, Betty?" he said, and for the first time his own voice grew unsteady with emotion.

She shook her head, crying silently.

"Whatever is, was meant to be. If we suffered the tortures of hell we couldn't alter what has already happened. And, as long as you are mine at least, and I am yours, I am content if the consequence is damnation."

They stood silent, side by side, before the fire, he with his hand upon her shoulder that was farther from him.

"I knew you'd see soon enough it was no good fighting. This thing is too strong for either of us, Betty."

She acquiesced with a sobbing sigh and a bowed down head.

There was no doubt about her surrender, yet was there no sign of rapturous triumph on his part, no delighted yielding to it on hers. It was the betrothal of two hearts that passionately loved, yet the tears that Betty shed were not those of joy and thankfulness but of remorse and foreboding, and Harringay's face, although it had softened into tenderness, was full of gloom.

Presently with a great effort, she seemed to regain command of herself, and with a determined gesture she wiped away the tears that kept gathering in her eyes.

"This is the last time I shall cry," she said, "the very last! I don't do things half-heartedly, you will see. I mean to be happy with my whole soul. From this time forth we will forget everybody—every thing —but ourselves."

Then she turned her face and kissed the hand that held her shoulder. "Do you know that from to-night there is no one in all the world but just you and me?" she asked him softly.

At the touch of her lips he clasped her closer, and the tender gloom of his face broke up, and it was a face of passionate tenderness in which he compelled her to look.

"All through that time I never held your hand in

mine, I never touched your lips," he said with fierce abruptness. "It seems to me that I should have my reward—yes, it seems so to me!"

"And you will be ready to marry me in three weeks' time?"

"Yes. I can be ready when you like."

"I should like to start in the *Leopold* steamer which leaves on the 30th of next month. That will give us a few days to ourselves before we sail. What do you say?"

"As you like. It will do perfectly."

"But you are not to be indifferent. I only want to please you. Is there any other country to which you would like to go? Do you prefer to stay in this?"

"All countries are the same to me," she said. "And all times—so long as I may be with you."

It seemed that Betty was bent on proving to him that she was not indeed one to do things by halves.

CHAPTER IV.

"SHE GAVE ME HERSELF, O EARTH, O SKY!"

But after all, it turned out that the marriage could not take place so soon as had been intended. The date was fixed a day later for this reason, a day later for that, until the wedding was finally arranged for that before the one on which the *Leopold's* passengers must be aboard.

"I suppose you will write and tell Carlyon?" Harringay had said at the beginning of the time. And Betty had answered, short and sharp, that she should do nothing of the sort.

It was a subject on which Harringay was comfortably indifferent and he did not attempt to re-open the question. But many and many a time that question presented itself to Betty and ever more fiercely and emphatically she answered, "No!" Until there remained only three days to that finally fixed for the marriage.

Then she wrote and told him of what was in store for her, confessed that she had intended to keep the step a secret from him and, with her tears falling like rain upon the paper, besought him to forgive her for her reticence in the matter.

"Forgive me," she wrote, "for this last sin toward you, and for all my other sins. No one but you would be generous enough to forgive, but to your generosity all things are possible. We sail for Africa the next day. It is more than possible I never see

you again. Don't quite forget me—yet try to forget me as the unsatisfactory Betty of this later time—the Betty who has been so unhappy and has given so much trouble—and remember only the little pinafored Betty who used to torment you at Queen Anne's and be made furiously jealous if Ian or Emily was allowed to sit upon your knee."

It was on the day before her marriage that she showed the answer to this letter to her future husband.

"You see I wrote after all," she said.

"So it appears," he answered composedly, and gave Carlyon's letter back into her hand, unread.

"He is coming up to be present at our marriage. He deplores the hurry and privacy, the reason for which, he says, he does not understand. He can't be in town till the mail to-night. I have to write to him at the Great Eastern Hotel the church and the time. He wishes to give me away."

"Isn't that rather a nuisance?"

"It is kind and dear and sweet of him!"

"But it is a nuisance all the same."

"You are a mountain of insensibility; you are a huge, incarnate selfishness. I am certain if I ever could put you away from myself and look at you as I do at other people, I should hate the sight of you. Can't you put yourself in Bill's place for one minute?"

"I wouldn't be there for a million!"

"Can't you perceive—even dimly—what a hideously painful thing this will be for him?"

"I am lost in the contemplation of what a hideously inconvenient thing it will be for us. We can't, in decency, drive away from the church as we intended

—no one in the world having the right to say us nay—we can't, in decency, do that. We shall have to take Bill Carlyon and give him something to eat."

Betty's eyes, in which there was at times the glitter of sunlit seas, flashed upon him full of scorn: "Eat!" she said, "Bill Carlyon eat on the day of my marriage to you!"

Harringay laughed at that, and, when she would have turned her face angrily away from him, he caught her chin in his hand and made her endure the admiration of his eyes.

"We have lost the combative Betty, somehow, of late," he said, "but I have never doubted that she would reappear. You see, my most precious, there is never a moment of life so exalted and sublime that the degraded needs of our own fallen nature don't make themselves felt. You will see that even on the day of our marriage we shall eat, Betty. I, who have won you, Carlyon who has lost you, even you—you used to have a healthy kind of appetite, dear—you will probably be as hungry as a hunter. And—think of it, fierce one!—our first meal together spoilt! A feast of dead-sea fruit—Carlyon imported into the scheme!"

All such lamentations, however, were premature and proved themselves to be quite uncalled for. All the communication that Carlyon held with the pair was held in the church before and after the ceremony.

Harringay found him there already in conversation with the clergyman when he arrived. He was struck as if he saw him then for the first time by the fine figure of a man, by the attraction of his kind and patient face, by a new dignity of bearing and reserve

of manner which had come to William Carlyon through secret sorrow and bitter disappointment, silently and unselfishly borne.

His grievance about the presence of a third at his wedding feast, if the grievance had indeed been genuine, died out of Harringay's mind, and the thought of what a blight he had been on this better man's life, hidden and put out of sight for long, rose up and hit him like a blow from a forgotten foe. In spite of himself his face grew pale, his narrow grey eyes encountering Carlyon's for a moment, shot away from the deliberate gaze. But he put out his hand and said with a certain humility of bearing, as becoming as it was unaccustomed,

"I have to thank you sincerely for coming. It will always be a great happiness to Betty to think that you were here."

Carlyon did not respond to the anxious friendliness of the other's tone.

"I thought it better that at least one of her old friends should be near her at such a time," was all he said.

Then he turned away and faced the big door at the end of the church and spoke no more.

"Here she is," he said at length, quietly.

She came into church accompanied by Mrs. Stone, the proprietrix of the Students' Boarding-House, who, at the last moment, had volunteered to accompany her, the news of her marriage having been carefully withheld from all the other inmates of number seven. This lady seemed to repent of her lately assumed responsibility, for she dropped aside into a pew near the door and Betty came on alone.

Betty Jervois was too highly strung, felt too deeply,

to look her best at important crises of her life. She looked very far from her best on her wedding-day. Her face was white, her eyes troubled and heavy, her hair was arranged without her general regard for the picturesque, she had dressed herself in her every-day clothes and had put them on without her ordinary care. She looked at Carlyon when he came down the aisle to meet her and took her hand, she tried to speak to him but could not.

"Whatever is for your happiness is best for me, my dear," he said, in answer to the imploring appeal of her eyes.

But speech on his side seemed difficult. He pressed the hand to painfulness he held within his arm. "I always knew that this must be," he whispered, as they neared the altar. "I pray God to bless you and make you content."

It was as Betty had said, "Kind and dear and sweet of him to come," but it was nevertheless a fact that Carlyon's presence at her marriage, oppressed her heart with a weight of old memories, remorse, and sorrow that seemed like to break it. It was only mechanically she said the words which gave her to the man she loved; her thoughts were with the man whose love of her had been constant through her life. These later days, with all the heart-burning and passion of gladness and of woe, seemed to roll back from her like a lurid unfamiliar cloud, and she was back beneath the blue skies of the may-time of her youth with the little sisters, with Peter, with Violet—Violet, alas!—and the long figure of the good-natured young curate was the central figure there!

It had been of Bill that little Ian had talked on her

deathbed. "If I am married for forty years it is Bill that I shall like to have near me when I die," Betty said to herself.

And then to her own great surprise—for she had not even noticed—back in the region of the past—how far the service had advanced—she was married.

In the vestry Carlyon did not offer to kiss the bride, neither, for that matter did her husband, who had his own opinion of public displays of affection. It was, on the face of it, a most unemotional ceremony.

"They are dispiritingly matter of fact," the clergyman said, looking after the trio as they walked away. "A marriage of expediency, no doubt, and nothing more."

Harringay was commendably pressing in his invitation to Carlyon to join them at lunch, but he was not to be persuaded.

"I have a few commissions to do in town," he said, "and I am off again by the last train to-night. I have to find up the son of an old parishioner of mine who seems to be doing badly. I shall make him come and have some dinner with me. Altogether I shall not have much time on my hands."

From the steps of the church he watched the newly-married pair get into the hired carriage, having grasped their hands in farewell, having given utterance to the conventional phrases, sounding much the same on the careless lips of the casual acquaintance, or coming from the heart that would gladly give itself to have them realized. Out of the carriage window looked the familiar face he loved with that expression matured in her eyes whose beginnings he had known in her days of childish distress.

Never—never—never after to-day must that look—

any look in Betty's eyes—summon him to her side! In whatever she knew, or wrongs she suffered, he for the future would have no right to interfere, though he would give his life to defend her, his would not be the right to do so of the veriest stranger by whose side she might find herself.

Some such thought as this flashed through his brain; and at the same instant the face drew him—as it would have done, in spite of that "never—never—never!" across the world—to her side.

"Dear Bill," she said brokenly, "I want to say before I go that I thank you for all."

In the button-hole of his great-coat a little bunch of violets was pinned. He drew them carefully out and laid them in her lap;

"I gathered them for you yesterday, and they are faded," he said. "They grew in the garden at Queen Anne's; and you know who planted them there."

Betty's quivering face was before him for a minute and the eyes that implored him to understand. Then, stepping back, he raised his hat, and face and eyes were whirled away from his sight as he told himself for ever.

It was impossible that the day of their marriage could be an idle one—they were too near the hour of departure for that. After the lunch, which the presence of no third party was destined to spoil, they drove down to the docks and went on board the steamer to inspect their cabin to make sure the luggage had all arrived. And when Betty saw the bustle of the ship and felt the strangeness of it, the gloom which had hung about her hitherto fell from her like a dropped cloak, and hope sprang up in her heart, full

grown and radiant as in that of any other young bride. Happiness shone in her eyes, and her face lit as two or three who had loved it felt assured no other face in the world could lighten.

"How delightful it is that everything will be so *new!*" she said as they drove westward to make some purchases which had been forgotten. "I am eager to be off, Ted, to put everything behind us—that is what I long to do—the happy as well as the unhappy. For, when once it is over, it does not signify much which it was. Everything that is past is sad. There are times that were quite delightful in passing which I dare not even think of for the pain of it. Is that so with you?"

He told her no, that he was not of the army of self-tortures, "of which absurd sect, by the way, I begin to think you the most distinguished martyr, Betty. But I don't deny there are a few things in my life I should be uncommonly glad to forget. It is just the nasty parts that stick unfortunately."

"I shall help you to forget," she said with soft confidence.

He sighed with a feeling she had not expected, "Yes. You have helped me to forget a great deal," he said.

They arranged, at her suggestion, to go out for their dinner: "To sit—just you and me—with a solemn English waiter—than whom I know no person more pompous and offensive and depressing—behind my chair, would destroy my appetite again as it did at lunch and you would again be cross," she said. "Let us go where other people are, and lights and music. Appetite is infectious like gaiety, don't you think? And I long to be gay and *hungry* again. I am

quite happy, you understand, but I do feel so weighed down with the solemnity of what we have done."

"Little Philistine!" he called her. "The glare and racket of a popular restaurant on our marriage evening!" But he was in a mood to deny her nothing, and had a certain horror of the solemnity of which she had spoken, himself.

Therefore they shared their first dinner amid a scene that, unaccustomed as she was to aught more splendid than the sombre respectability of the boarding-house meal, mounted to Betty's brain more surely than the couple of glasses of champagne she drank. So, with her ever changing face and eyes that were eloquent of every passing feeling, she surveyed the scene and watched the groups at the neighboring tables; and Harringay, never pretending the interest he could not feel, watched her.

She was wearing now the dress which had been made for the morning's ceremony but which, at the last minute, she had discarded in favor of her work-a-day garment. It was of amethyst-colored cloth and suited her pale complexion well. Her firm white throat rose like the tower of which King Solomon sang from the broad flat band of velvet lying at its base. She wore no ornament save a small amethyst brooch which had been among her mother's jewelry, and the broad wedding ring upon her long white hand.

Harringay, who noticed everything about her, saw that on the left breast where the amethyst cloth and velvet fastened Carlyon's little branch of violets, quite faded now, was pushed.

"Wasn't I right?" she asked him, suddenly bringing her eyes back to her husband's face. "Isn't it more delightful to be together in a crowd and to be

independent of it because of the affinity between us than to be together because there is no one else in the neighborhood? Don't you feel that?"

"Certainly. But not because I am here." Then he explained to her, as he knew how to do, convincingly, and without waste of words what was the cause of his happiness that night.

"And I feel that too," she said softly, "only the crowd makes me feel it more intensely."

"I don't think I quite understood what a country cousin I was making my wife," he said. "It would be more amusing for you to go the round of the music halls, perhaps, than to study the new civilization of Central Africa?"

"I don't know," she laughed. "I am a very elementary sort of person myself. I expect the crude in my surroundings will appeal to me with force. You don't think it beneath me to take a lively interest in my kind, surely? Look at the girl at this next table, for instance. Isn't she pretty? Oh, well, you wouldn't put her into a picture, perhaps; a little too stumpy in the figure and bumpy in the forehead to suit the critical taste. But can't you see the intense happiness shining out of that demure face. She and her father, the fat man with the bald head, came up from Norfolk, yesterday, and are going back the day after to-morrow, and they have seats in the Upper Circle at the 'Haymarket' to-night. The young man with the spectacles and the dark moustache is in love with her, but is too shy, poor fellow, even to address her—"

"And where do you read that interesting fact? Is it shining out of the side of his head, or written on his bulging shirt front?"

"Both. It is to be seen, too, in the way in which he passes her the salt, in the flicker of his eyelid when she speaks. Oh, in a hundred ways!"

"And do you think what you are to me and what I am to you is equally legible to the rest of the company? Is some one at this moment saying 'That man sitting over there—the man with the baked potato skin and small slits for eyes—'"

Betty laughed into the "slits for eyes." "Go on. What of 'the baked potato?'"

"To him, we, who gibber and chatter, and eat around don't exist. Nothing exists—but the beautiful woman who sits before him. There is no world but in her eyes—no wisdom but in the foolish utterance of her lips—no history—no hope—nothing—nothing! Nothing but her alone! Is some one reading all that in the back of my head, do you think?"

Of ordinary love-making in their short engagement there had been little, their meetings had been brief, and generally in some public place, and there had been that in the circumstances of their case too serious for the admission of the ordinary caressings and lover's language considered appropriate if not necessary to the occasion. So that the unsealing of her husband's lips, the unveiling of his eyes was an event —and a disturbing one to Betty.

The words fell softly in his gentle, whispering voice, but Betty's eyes dropped from his, the color came faintly into her cheeks, and Carlyon's violets rose and fell a thought quicker on her breast.

Harringay pulled out his watch and showed it to her. "It is time for us to be getting back," he said.

When they were seated in the hansom which was

to take them to their hotel, Betty leaned forward and looked at the illuminated entrance to the place they had left.

"Good-bye, dear noisy, vulgar, glaring place—if you are all that," she said. "You have given me a happy hour."

"A happy two hours and a half to be exact," Harringay said. "By the way, Betty, while you were gone to put on your cloak I had nothing better to do than to listen to the conversation going on at the next table. I was thus enabled to test your powers as seer and thought-reader, and I congratulate you. The people who came up from Norfolk last night and return to-morrow are Germans. The young girl beaming with demure happiness is the wife of the 'father,' the hero with the quivering eyelids and the expressive way of handing the salt is her uncle."

Betty laughed, being equally content that things were so.

"And the other brilliant person who had a peep into your mental machinery. Did he, too, make mistakes?"

But the answer to this inquiry may well have been lost in the noise of the traffic.

CHAPTER V.

AN UNMOUNTED PHOTOGRAPH.

"'ORRID murder in Tott'n'm Court Road! Woman murdered by 'er 'usban'. 'Idges details," a newspaper boy shouted from the pavement. Betty shuddered as she entered the door of the hotel.

"Ah, how horrid!" she said. "How horrid!"

"What is horrid?" her husband asked her as he walked at her side up the wide, crimson-carpeted stairs. It struck him that her face was very pale beneath the glare of the electric light. All the gaiety had died out of it. It might almost have been the ghost of the face into which he had looked at dinner. "Tell me what is horrid, my precious."

But Betty did not care to repeat the ugly tale.

Harringay had looked for letters in the hall. There had been only one, and that addressed to his wife. He gave it to her as they came into the sitting-room, small, lofty, heavily decorated, and sweet with the flowers which Harringay had ordered to grace his marriage day.

Betty glanced at the thin, characterless handwriting of the superscription: "It is from Mrs. Stone," she said. "Look! Who could feel it anything but a weariness and a waste to open a letter in such a writing!"

She threw it unopened upon the table, and went into the adjoining bedroom to take off hat and cloak.

It was not for many minutes that, standing by the

fireplace, he watched the door through which she had gone. She was laughing ruefully when she reappeared.

"Look!" she said. "I don't know what has happened to me. The clasp of my cloak has caught in my veil and refuses to come undone. My veil is inseparably united to my hat. No amount of tugging can tear my hat from my hair. Unless you can do something for me, I suppose I must wear all three garments to my grave."

His fingers, at once delicate and strong, were not clumsy at that sort of work. It seemed that they understood the affinity of Russian net with ambushed bits of wire. The vagaries of hat pins, of which nothing but the naked points were visible to the eye, of elastic which knotted itself freely in curling deep red hair.

Betty, with an exclamation of impatience, sent the hat and veil flying across the room: "If I had only others unpacked, I would throw them on the fire," she said to Harringay, now busy with the clasp at her throat.

The hook of the clasp had become bent and required some strength, and suddenly his fingers began to tremble and in another instant he had abandoned his efforts, had slipped his arms beneath the heavy cloak, and was holding her in a close embrace.

"I have spent certain hours of my life since I have loved you as nearly in hell as it is possible for a man to live through. This is to compensate," he said.

"You don't repent of your bargain, Betty? You aren't afraid?"

"Afraid?" she repeated with disdain. "Of what should I be afraid? Certainly not of the future—

with you. And as to the past, have we not agreed we have none—no memories, no regrets—none!"

And while she said it she heard Bill Carlyon's broken voice saying, "Whatever is best for you is best for me, my dear." She saw the look of strained attention in Violet's eyes—the look she had worn as the boat shot down the river in the evening light, and Harringay's lips now and then dropped a word that his wife could not hear!

Nay, so treacherous a servant is the mind, which instead of obeying superior orders is ever tripping off on an errand of its own, so lightning quick is thought, so undying is memory, it seemed to Betty that in that instant in which she foreswore her past she lived once again through a thousand forgotten scenes in her own life. Scenes in which Bill, gentle, protecting, kind, for ever walked: where was always Violet—Violet the happily named, the ever self-effacing, humble and sweet. She saw herself surrounded by her childhood's court, always the tyrant of the hour, always bent on the attaining of her own ends, always ready to relinquish them directly they were ceded to her. Fighting with Peter or Ian or Emily for some coveted possession which once hers she would deliberately cast from her, miserably lacking in her own person that universal indifference which allows one man to enjoy what another loses.

"No past, no memories, no regrets!" she said with her lips, while her eyes surveyed such scenes as these.

She slipped from his arms and soon was looking across at him, the table between, a tall and queenly-looking person to-night, in her long fur-lined cloak—a far more costly garment than had ever been in her

possession before, and which Harringay had bought her that afternoon.

"Do you know," she told him, "when I was a child my idea of misery was that Peter should die; of happiness, that you should love me? Only let your wishes be definite, you see, and you get what you want. Mine were always well explained. You were not only to love me, but you were to love no one else in all the world. I have got my wish, haven't I?"

"We will see about it. Come here, and let me take off your cloak."

She shook her head at him across the table. "I adore you," she said, "but at taking off ladies' cloaks you are clumsy."

As he crossed the room to her, his eyes full of light, his lips parted, she bent over the table and encircled with her arms the vase of flowers which stood upon it. "They couldn't be present at my marriage, but they are my marriage flowers all the same, and I love them," she said softly, and with her lips she touched a white rose here, and there a waxen tulip, and stirred the lilies of the valley with a finger tip.

When she raised herself from above the flowers her hand came in contact with the letter which had been thrown upon the table.

"Poor Mrs. Stone!" she said, picking up the missive. "Let us see what thrilling communication you have to make. I owe someone sixpence for postage stamps, I expect, or a toothbrush has been found behind the washing-table, or a pair of shoes has come home from the mending."

He was standing slightly behind her, with his arms about her beneath the heavy cloak. With his chin bent upon her shoulder, he watched her open the letter.

Under the flap of the envelope the words were scratched, "Found by Martha in the pages of the Bible you gave her as a parting gift." Within was nothing but an unmounted photograph.

With fingers cruelly shaking Betty pulled it forth. It fluttered to the table and lay there—the pictured face, with its wistful, listening look, smiling up into the faces of the pair above it.

Harringay's arms fell from his new wife's waist, his face grew hard as stone. For a minute a silence, so crowded with terror, remorse, hatred, that it might have been an age fell upon them. Then Betty fell on her knees and bowed her head upon arms folded on the table and wept.

In her overstrung condition, the incident that had happened seemed for the moment, as final in its operation as if the dead woman herself had appeared and with relentless arms pushed the new husband and wife apart.

She had put back that portrait in its old hiding-place, but she had been horribly conscious of its whereabouts in the box at the foot of her bed. To its presence there was to be credited the fact that Violet was in all her dreams, and haunted always her earliest waking thoughts. When that morning, she had put the Bible, the picture pressed between its leaves, into the hands of the Stanfield Gardens servant she had thought she had laid that ghost for ever. But the Bible had given up its secret as surely as the river had yielded up its dead.

She had coveted this man's love—the love that should have been another woman's. She had her desire—but at what a cost! However close her husband held her that pale shade would creep between.

The pathetic, smiling face, the wistful accusing eyes —even on her marriage night—even now in the darkness, made by her shielding arms she saw it with horrible clearness, growing larger, closer—!

She threw up her head to reassure herself with a sight of the handsome photograph—and it was gone from the table.

She looked across at her husband, standing with his back to the fire:

"Where is it?" she asked him, in a whisper full of awe.

"Burnt," he answered shortly, "I burnt it." At that she looked at him as if he had done some dreadful thing.

"Burnt it?" she repeated slowly. "Oh, Ted! How *dared* you do that?"

"How dared I burn a photograph? My dear, I have burnt hundreds in my time."

Her face was pathetic in its struggle to reconcile his easy fashion of adjusting this matter with the immensity of its import in her own mind. She came slowly nearer to him and sank into the armchair at his side.

"Darling, what made you cry?" he asked her with that break in his ordinarily steady voice which shook her so.

"She was your wife," she said faintly, "she seemed to come between."

Then he went on his knees beside her and took her in her arms: "You are my wife—you—you," he said. "And this is our wedding night—and not man nor woman, God nor devil shall come between!"

His passion was so fierce it was for the moment

convincing. Then the uneasy conscience spoke again, the memories that would not be laid awoke.

"I wish you had not burnt that picture, dear," she said. "She was your wife—and she loved you so—and you—there must have been a time when you—"

He held her closer, mistaking her, thinking it was some natural jealousy of the dead woman she felt.

"No, no," he said hurriedly. "Never! Good God, you knew that, did you not? You saw us together. Although I could not speak—you knew—?"

He had thought that he knew Betty through and through, how was it that at this vital moment he so fatally mistook her? She was hungering for the assurance that their sin against his wife was not such a great sin after all; and he strove to comfort her by asserting his treachery.

She stirred uneasily in his arms, then lay still.

"Did Violet also know," she asked.

"Violet never understood the wisdom of silence—and at last she asked me."

"And you?"

"I would as soon have denied the God that made me. I told her it was true. I told her too that she might trust me for your sake. But she would not. You remember, beloved, she would not let us be together on that last night. She had to pay—she had to pay."

Betty lay still in his arms—too numbed with anguish to free herself. But one thing more was needed to complete the circle of intolerable pain: she asked for it.

"Ted," she said, "if you had let me drown could Violet have been saved?"

"I could not save you both," he said, "If by giving

my own life I could have saved you both I swear I would have done it. But I could not; and her clutch hampered me."

"Yes?"

He had loosed his hold of her and got upon his feet. Overmastering as was his love for his young wife he could not clasp her in his arms while he spoke of the other woman's death.

"Great God! Must we talk of these things to-night of all nights in the year!" he said.

"Never—after to-night," Betty said through stiff lips. "Tell me now. I have always wanted to know.

"She had gripped my shoulder and arm. I was holding you up—one of you must have gone. I told her to let go."

"Well?"

"She did."

If he had seen her face he never would have told her, but he was looking into the fire, seeing another face, for the minute; and eyes that had looked despair into his before they sank beneath them and the great river.

Some word whose import he did not catch fell from Betty's lips. Horror was frozen in her eyes. For yet an instant he was forgetful of her, claimed by the other woman.

"There was something heroic in what she did for she was a timid woman," he said, looking before him, with a hard set face and gloomy eyes. "She cut herself off from hope, deliberately, of her own free will. Afterwards, when she rose again, and clung to me, it was mechanical, simply, by no conscious action. She never knew that I struck her off."

There came a sound from Betty lying in her chair, a breaking forth of some of the load upon her heart to keep it from bursting. He turned swiftly and looked at her, and knew what he had done.

Their eyes met for a long minute in silence; then:

"How horrible!" Betty breathed.

Harringay started as if waking from a dream that had held him: "It was horrible," he said. "Do you think I haven't, in every moment of my life since, realized the horror? It had to be done."

She got up slowly from her chair, and dragging her limbs stiffly as if she was not sure of their use, stood before him.

"Ted," she said, "we ought not to have been married. It is a sin."

"In God's name, why?"

"A hideous sin!"

"Tell me what you mean," he said, with a certain cold fierceness she had never seen in him before. "Say it out, once and for all, and have done with it."

She was pale as death and swayed a little as she stood, and for a time she did not speak. At length in a broken whisper she got out the words.

"I am selfish and wicked—but I am not a monster. I will not have happiness—happiness—that cost so much."

He laughed at that, not a sound of mirth or triumph at all.

"It seems to me such a declaration comes rather late in the day," he said. "You may not have happiness—perhaps I do not quite understand what that term conveys to you—but, seeing you were married to me this morning, you must, you see, have me."

She waited again because of the physical difficulty of getting out her words.

"It would be monstrous," she said at length," I am not a monster. She was murdered—Violet—You murdered her—Oh!"—

She ended in a loud irrepressible cry of distress—she could not have told in that moment if it was mentally or physically she suffered so horribly—and flung up her hands to her head.

He caught her in his arms and stifled her cry with a hand upon her mouth. "Hush!" he said authoritatively, and she shook in his arms and was silent.

"It has been a long and trying day and you are overwrought," he said. "It is because you are overtired you see things in such distorted fashion. You are tired, darling."

He laid his hand upon her hanging head, and softly coaxed and coaxed the thick and beautiful hair, then kissed it and laid his face upon it.

"I had forgot," he said in his whispering, gentlest voice, "I had forgotten what a little self-torturer I had taken to my heart. I had forgot that my own burdens I have been always strong enough to bear alone, and that no lightest past should be laid upon your shoulders. You tempted me to forget, my most precious? you have always made me forget so much. Dear, let me see your face. You are not crying?"

She gently shook her head. The horror that was upon her was too deep for tears—for any expression. If she might have given one loud soul-scaring scream! If only the luxury of going mad might be hers!

He took her face in his hands, the handsome hands she had always loved and admired, the hands that had

struck down his drowning wife when she had clasped him.

"I must have been mad to have distressed you so. Forget about it—let it be as if it had not been spoken —and forgive me, my darling," he said.

She put her hands on his shoulders, steadying herself against him, for, now that his arms were removed from her, she swayed unsteadily still. She looked long in his face.

"I forgive you, my love," she said. "It is I—I who want to be forgiven. Now let me go. I am very tired," she said.

For an instant—one instant out of all eternity—he held her before him still, then with his last passionate kiss upon her mouth, she broke away from him and went swiftly but unsteadily from the room.

The sitting-room and bedroom adjoined. The dressing-table stood opposite the door. As Harringay closed the door upon his wife's back, he caught sight in the looking-glass of Betty's face advancing amid the handsome furniture of the brilliantly-lighted room. He noticed one of his own old brown portmanteaux, which had been all over the world with him, standing upon Betty's brand new tin box.

Later, when he entered the room, the looking-glass gave back no reflection save his own alone. He had thought, among other things, but now, that his portmanteau would be heavy for her to drag from its place in order to get at her own luggage. Neither had, evidently been touched. No desert could have seemed to him so empty, as did the undisturbed propriety of that overcrowded space.

Harringay was troubled with no torturing suspense. In the first flash of recognition, that the place which should have held his wife was empty, he knew the full extent of that which had befallen him. Fate had fooled him. His wife was gone.

He stood in the centre of the room, motionless. The possibility of what had occurred had not so much as presented itself to his brain. Yet without thought or reasoning or mental effort of any kind—he knew.

He looked for the paper laid upon the dressing-table, knowing well it would be there. It was pinned to the cloth by a hat-pin, a fellow to that one he had extracted in a former age of existence. He picked it up mechanically—the very words he seemed to know by heart. They were scrawled on the back of the letter in which he had written down for her the hour of the morning's marriage service.

"We can't undo the horrible thing that is done—but we dare not profit by it," she had written in a hand he would not have recognized as hers, and could not read but that the words seemed to be written in his own brain. "I will never see you again, and I pray God I may be always as heart-broken as I am to-night."

He crumpled the note in his hand and flung it upon the little fire burning cheerfully in the grate. Then he took his hat and went downstairs.

It was a perfectly cool and self-possessed man who questioned the chamber-maid waiting on the landing.

The lady had gone downstairs half an hour ago. She was wearing a long fur cloak and no hat. The hood of the cloak was pulled over her head. The hall-porter had called a hansom for her. On being

questioned, it was found he had not heard the direction given.

The dark gentleman with the unmoved face had a hansom called for him also. In it he rode forth into the darkness and returned no more to the Battenburg Hotel that night.

CHAPTER VI.

"BILL, YOU MUST TAKE ME HOME."

THE Reverend William Carlyon had fulfilled all the commissions with which Caroline had entrusted him. He had found that unsatisfactory son who was causing his old friend and parishioner, Mrs. Butcher, so much anxiety, and during the progress of lunch to which he had treated that impecunious person had extracted promises of future good behavior, sufficient to fill the heart of the poor mother at Blow Weston with pride and thanksgiving for the time being. He had meant to keep himself occupied until the last minute, and had carefully immersed himself in a rush of business which had given no time for thought.

He had dined in public. He would not be left to his own thoughts—to the thought of Betty dining alone with her husband. A man sitting next him appeared to have very strong opinions on some matter. Carlyon could not afterward remember on what subject they argued. In company with this same person he went to the billiard room, and even attempted, himself, to play a game, an essay over which he did not exactly cover himself with glory. After this short exhibition of incapacity he became simply an on-looker.

The waiter who came to tell him that the down-train was due in a quarter of an hour found him standing with his back against the wall, his hands in

his trousers pockets and a gaze that, fixed upon the green cloth of the table before him, saw quite other things. The kind blue eyes that were lifted at the interruption were dull and blurred.

But he thanked the waiter in his friendly, simple way, and having fed that functionary and paid his bill, went up to his bedroom to collect his few belongings.

To that refuge the now affectionate waiter obsequiously pursued him with a respectful tap upon his door.

"A lady has called to see you, sir."

"A lady?" Carlyon lifted a rough head from the towel with which he was vigorously rubbing his face, "Come in, waiter. A lady?"

"She said it was hurgent, and she hasked me to 'and you this, sir."

The clergyman opened the scrap of folded paper pushed through the aperture of the door and read, written in pencil the one word "Betty."

"I have hasked the lady into a sitting-room which 'appened to be vacant, next door, sir," the waiter said.

She was standing only just within the door. Bill had scarcely closed it behind him before she was holding him with two shaking hands upon his breast, grasping his coat lapels to steady herself.

"Bill, you must take me home with you," she said. "You must take me somewhere—hide me—I don't care where. I don't care what you do with me—only don't let me go back to him. Don't let me see him. I love him so—I love him so! and he—is a murderer.'

CONCLUSION.

BETTY held in her hand a letter, written closely in a cramped, not too legible hand, on flimsy foreign paper—a letter which had come that morning and already had been many times read.

It had been read at breakfast, where Caroline at the head of the table, having given one glance at the envelope and at Betty's face, had sat with studiously averted gaze; where the children, promoted in the holidays to share their elders' morning meal, had squabbled as to which should have the African stamp; where Bill sat withdrawn with his coffee cup behind the *Times*, in a silence which got upon one's nerves.

It had been read again and again in the privacy of Betty's own bedroom: and now, as the heat of the August day began to decline toward evening, she took it with her into the open air to read again.

The children were at their tea, Caroline had been called to a sick-bed in the village, the rector was sitting in the library, which had once been Betty's father's. For it was Friday, the day still conscientiously set apart for the composition of his sermons.

So Betty, free from all fear of interruption, carried her letter into the remotest part of the garden, where a long grass walk, bordered on each side by old apple-trees and an under-growth of nut-bushes, separated the flower from the kitchen-garden. It was here in the childish days that the cemetery had been situated. This had been the scene of the elaborate funeral pro-

cessions which had attended the interment of each loved, ill-fated pet. Here all the stray birds, found dead in the garden, starved by the winter frosts, trapped by the gardener, rescued from the claws of the cats, had been given a last resting place. Most of the little graves had sunk and disappeared by now; yet here and there was still a small headstone —fashioned by the ever useful curate. Generally, these of the more lasting kind. And one quite recently erected was there.

Betty had found it, when walking here beneath a sullen December sky and dripping branches, in the first days of her return. A white stone of quite ambitious proportions, on which a mason's chisel had cut the name of Paul the cat.

Betty in the selfish abstractions of her sorrow had not even noticed that the animal was no more. Its decease, truth to tell, had been a matter of rejoicing to the household. Paul's age and his many infirmities rendering him not exactly a favorite with Caroline and the children. Paul, with an abscess in his ear and rheumy eyes, and an unamiable habit of swearing, spitting and scratching with equal venom over a kick or caress, would have had a rough time of it but for Bill's unfailing protection.

But Paul, was happily dead; and on his memorial stone, erected by his patrons, his name, fame and epitaph were recorded in three words. "PAUL, IAN'S KITTEN."

It was that legend, chanced upon in those early days, which, unaccountably appealing to her, as in certain states of mind such small things will, had suddenly loosed the fount of Betty's frozen tears, cleared the bewildered brain, stirred the numbed heart and

given the girl back again—some one he once more knew and understood—not the strange, indifferent, unapproachable woman who had frightened him—to the one man whose sympathy and understanding had been the mainstay of her life.

She paused by the little stone now for a minute, even with the letter in her hand: "Dear Ian!" she said—"Dear Bill!"

Then she drew out the letter and read it once more. She read it as we read the letters of those we love, not hurrying over, or slighting any part; but over a word or a phrase here and there she paused, reading it again and again, her lips repeating it lingeringly.

"Have I not been sufficiently punished?" she read. "Are you satisfied with the severity of your self-torture? I think I know you well enough to know you have relented long ago. Write and say so, and I come at once.

"If you want me to acknowledge the justice of my punishment I do not, nor ever will. It was too hideously cruel. If I had sinned past the forgiveness of God you should have forgiven me, Betty. Do you think, for one instant that I repent. If the thing were to be done again a thousand times over I would do it. I have been sick and mad and sad enough—I have never wished that I had done otherwise. It was a cursed fate, I grant you—but what man, feeling what I felt would not have done the same? I repent that I told you—I curse myself hourly for that folly. The thing was so familiar to my own mind and I thought you knew—or guessed.

"I have taught myself to think it is you who could never be forgiven. I have taught myself to hate you.

I thought I taught myself. I said if you came to me on your knees and implored me to pardon what you had done I would not. I said I would die of pain before I sought you. But I knew it was play-acting all the time; I knew in the end I should be where I am now, grovelling at your feet, begging for mercy.

"It is the loneliness which has got hold of me and shaken me, and which makes me write like this. You never heard me whine before, Betty.

"Even Bill in his righteousness—I am not mocking—he is a good fellow—he would have done as I did. Ask him. He is a good fellow. I never distrusted him—never. The devil said to me 'you took away a wife of his—he has his revenge.' I didn't listen—I hardly listened. I followed you to his hotel that night and learned that he and you had left together. I never doubted either of you. I swear it.

"Ask him now what you should do. I am not afraid. Ask him. He will tell you to write me the word I long to get.

"She was hindering me from saving the woman I loved with all my soul. You didn't think of that when you left me in that horrible way.

"I am with Peter now. We sometimes jaw about old times, but he is a silent fellow, and oftener we sit for hours and days and do not speak. His thoughts are with his insects, I expect. Mine are with you and the Hell you and I together have made of our lives, first and last.

"I told Peter about it. It was when I was bad with the fever the other day—I am as nearly right as possible now—and I told him before I knew what I was doing. Peter did not beat about the bush. 'Betty is

a fool,' he said. 'She was always a fool—but there was never anyone like her. Write and tell her to stop being an ass and to come out here.'

"But the place is not fit for you, my precious wife. Write me the one word, and I will fetch you and we will go—

"Oh, what does it matter where we go, Betty, if I am with you and you with me once more!"

When Betty had finished again the reading of that letter she folded it away and drew from her pocket the answer she had already written. She read it over with a dissatisfied frown—a long letter, filled with details of what she had suffered and done and thought. Of how she had longed and prayed to die but could not even fall ill. Of how Bill had been her support and comfort without whom she must have gone mad. Of how he had been on Harringay's side, always, as her own heart had been, pointing out that, however opinions might differ as to Harringay's opinion in the matter, she being his wife and not his judge had a clear duty.

"Duty, I'm afraid, has not had and never will have anything to do with me," she wrote. "It was feeling, not duty that sent me away from you that night; it is that only which keeps me away from you now, and the knowledge that with this dreadful tragedy coming between we never could be happy. And yet, it is not that, it is the knowledge that we should be happy in spite of everything, and that our happiness would be the one wrong more done to her.

"Yet, since you want me still, come to me. Come—for my own need of you is too great.

"'Where shall we go?' you say, and I echo your

answer. What does it matter unless we can find a new world where old things are forgotten, old wrongs righted, old sins blotted out. A world where I might live again the days when I loved you with all my childish soul and knew no harm.

"Do you remember Ian's Cedar Star, Ted? That little heaven we made to suit our own needs—where all the pets were, and the flowers, and the happy days? In the Cedar Star every memory was effaced save those we loved to dwell on?

"We will go where you like, my husband, and happy or miserable, we will at least be together. But only in the Cedar Star shall we ever find forgetfulness and peace."

She read thus far in what she had written, then deliberately tore the letter across and across.

"He asks for bread," she said, "And I give him a stone. Could he have done that thing and not suffered horribly? I saw it and did not know it in his whitened hair and the lines cut in his face. Am I, Betty Jervois, the woman to be for ever casting a man's sin in his teeth—a sin in which mine was the biggest share? Because I punished myself as well I thought my judgment a fine one. I see it was a sin the more. I will ask him for his forgiveness—I will ask so that he does not know how to refuse. When he asks for me—my life—I will not send him cold arguments such as these.

"I will wrap him round in love. He shall shelter safe with me from all the grief and remorse that have made a torment of his mind. What matter if, when I wake up at his side, her face always come before my eyes if his eyes do not see? What if I shudder at that dear hand of his, knowing the cruel stroke it had

wrought, so that the shudder be inward? What if I live among torturing memories that will not die, so that forgetfulness come to him.

"He asks me for a word—he shall have it—not a sermon!"

She threw the fragments of her letter among the nut-bushes—the pieces fluttered slowly through the branches to rest upon the little half-obliterated graves —and with a quick step, a lifted head, a light in her eyes that had not been there for many a long day, she turned toward the house.

Mr. Goggs, the owner of the Crabberton grocery stores and manager of the post and telegraph office for that parish, had been regaled in the rectory kitchen with a mug of beer. He had remounted his noisy cart and rattled slowly away from the back door as Betty passed it on her way to the library window. Two of the rectory servants, standing at the door to witness his departure, looked after Betty as she passed, whispering together, with something of awe upon their faces.

Betty remembered all her life afterwards what a hush had lain upon all nature in that hour, how silent everything had seemed, how the clatter of the departing cart had seemed to emphasize the quiet.

She looked through the library window at Bill, sitting before the study table, his eyes not upon the paper before him, as she noticed, but seeming to look before him with an intentness and in an absolute stillness that was unnatural and portentous. He had not heard her footsteps as she had come quickly over the grass.

"Bill," she called, and her voice was eager and

strong and full of tone as he had not heard it for long, "Bill!"

He got upon his feet, but very slowly, and he did not at once turn to her.

"I have heard from—my husband."

She paused over the strangeness of that last word, for no mortal had heard her call Harringay by that name before.

"He asks me if he may come over to fetch me. He asks me to write him a word in reply. I shall not write, I shall send a telegram. I shall put only one word, 'Come.' Will you see to that for me at once, Bill?"

He turned round stiffly then, and she saw his face, the white, painfully composed face of disaster. In his fingers a flimsy paper fluttered.

She had stepped into the room, but at sight of him she drew back against the window. Carlyon went toward her; but in that moment, to save her life and his own, it seemed to him, he could not speak.

"Is that a telegram?" she asked him.

He bent his head, the hauntingly solemn eyes of the one who has to tell ill news upon her suddenly stricken face.

"From Africa?"

He could only make a motion of acquiescence.

"Someone is dead?"

His head fell lower.

"Is it my husband or my brother?"

"It is Ted Harringay," he said, the power of speech coming to him at last.

He was not afraid of suffering, having known what it was to suffer. He knew what a salve to eyes dry

with misery, what a balm to the rebellious, fevered heart are the silence and the peacefulness of the quiet night. How a man grows ashamed to boast his private trumpery sorrow looking up at the stars, solemn with the knowledge of the sorrow of a world. How submission to the brief day's heart-break comes in the contemplation of the eternal. How, not only the new burden of despair falls from a man's shoulders but that old weary weight of worldliness which is one with the flesh, and he gazes disembodied, as it were, made one with the night, and with the peace of God.

When the weary light of that summer day had quite departed, he went slowly upstairs, and knocked at Betty's bedroom door, and called her name.

She went to him at once.

"I am not ill," she said. "Did you think I should be ill? God is not so merciful as that."

"Come into the garden," he said. "I won't bother you. You shall not speak unless you like—but come out."

She took him at his word, and chose to be silent. But now and again as he walked beside her in the soft darkness, his hands clasped behind his back, he spoke.

"It is less suffocating out of doors," he said. "One can be very happy within four walls. It is possible to feel that they are as full as they can hold with happiness, and yet to breathe within them. But in a great sorrow one wants the illimitable around one. One wants only heaven over head."

Betty made no response. Her eyes, dry and burning for want of tears, looked into the surrounding darkness, seeing ghosts.

She saw her husband dying, fever-parched, with

scant necessaries, and only Peter to attend him. Dying, haunted by dreams of a wasted life, by the memory of treachery repaying one who had loved him, heart-broken because the woman, in whom he had placed the trust another man would have put only in Heaven, had failed him. She saw the body she so loved given into unloving, alien hands, pushed, coffinless, at sundown into the ground. She saw the dust fall upon the face that had been as no other face to her—dust in the eyes she loved. She saw the dark forms of noisome beasts drawing near.

Then Ted Harringay was coming down the garden-path, smiling to meet her—the smile in his eyes and twisting one corner of his thin lips. He was sitting in the deck chair beneath the cedar tree on the lawn, herself a red-haired, happy child adoring at his feet.

Not for her the haunting smile now but for the girl coming slowly across the grass to him, shy reluctance in her feet, and eager longing in the rose-white of the innocent face. Violet!

A moan burst from Betty's lips, whether for the later vision or for that of the lonely, soon to be deserted grave, she could not have told.

"Dares any man stand out on such a night as this and dispute the existence of another world?" the rector said, "of a life where other chances are given us—greater wisdom—a purer sight? The night is black around us, Betty, but look up, dear, look into it, do not be afraid—and there are the stars."

But Betty would not look up.

"And if we do believe in another life," Carlyon went on in that low half-ashamed tone which alone was his to command when it seemed to him his duty to assert that position of teacher he so humbly filled,

"how can we fret and fume and make such ado? If things that seem all tangled and awry are going to be put straight, and misunderstandings made plain; if there are to be happy meetings and blest companionship, what does a little lingering on the road matter, Betty; a rough place here and there, a solitariness which is to be so fleeting."

And Betty only set her teeth in pain and clenched her hands to think of a heaven where Violet must for ever stand—Violet in her white robes, with her reproachful, gentle eyes, the judge of the two who had wronged her.

"And if, as some think," Carlyon went on with his simple preaching, "it is to be entirely without recollection of what has been that we begin again—what fear then, Betty? A new life, a clean record—not the end of all, but the blessed, blessed beginning."

But Betty took no consolation. What a mockery of a heaven would that place be where Harringay and she would not even know each other! Better to have him for ever before her eyes suffering on his dying bed than that!

She thought how, even in her childhood, she and her little sisters had renounced their share in the heaven which her father and the curate preached, the heaven with the everlasting harping, the ceaseless hymning of praise, the mixture of awe and tedium which promised to carry on their church experience through eternity.

She thought of that world of their own making, but which to each of the little Jervoises had been so real. The world where they were to be for ever children, for ever to play, to laugh, to work in their eager, busy, useless way. Where nothing was to go wrong, where

the plants in their gardens would not die even if neglected, where dogs and cats had not to be punished, where only people they loved very much were to come in. The population of Ian's heaven had been lamentably small.

There came, all at once, to Betty's memory, the recollection of a long forgotten day when she had insisted that, of the small and select few inhabiting Ian's star, Ted Harringay should be one. He had been out of favor with the others at the time and had been refused admittance, and Betty had fought for him. She had fought and vanquished Ian, and had fought and not so easily vanquished Peter, who had unexpectedly taken Ian's part, and had so gained an immortal seat for her hero.

We smile with our lips at the fancies and the superstition of our childhood, but do we ever smile at them in our hearts? We grow wiser as we grow less happy, but the heaven that was about us in our nursery beds is the one that, in spite of our scepticism and our better knowledge, the heart hungers after in affliction —it is the one, thank God, into which we look from the bed of death!

So Betty repudiated the theological heaven of which the curate spoke, walking at his side. She thought she knew that beyond no earthly skies were hidden the gates of pearl and the shining streets of gold. She scorned the idea that the men and women she had loved would be set to perpetual flying hither and thither, chanting their endless songs. It was impossible so to picture them, and she was glad it was so.

But this heaven of her childhood—the heaven where Ian waited in scarlet pinafore and sunbonnet,

with Paulie in her arms—the heaven where Ted Harringay thanks to her, little Betty Jervois, was to have a place—oh, that this were possible!

They had wandered round and round the garden, passing now this green path, now that gravel walk, the scent of mignonette and sweet night-stock pursuing them with a relentless overpowering fragrance which ever after seemed to Betty mysteriously one with that night's sorrow. Carlyon, thinking that her steps faltered a little, and that she was weary, led her to sit upon the long garden seat placed outside the library window.

Before them was the barn, the huge cedar tree, its sharp outlines black and sombre against the soft darkness of the sky. Betty's head fell backwards, her eyes traveled wearily from straight black branch to straight black branch, motionless in the breathless night. Above them shone clear and radiant a star.

Bill, watching her, saw presently the hardness of her face soften, saw the feverish pained eyes grow dim with tears, saw the painful line of the tightly locked lips quiver into tremulousness and lovableness again.

She put her hand on Carlyon's arm and without moving her eyes pointed solemnly upward.

"Oh, look," she said, "The Cedar Star!"

THE END.

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